

A D V I C E

FROM A

LADY OF QUALITY

TO HER

C H I L D R E N,

IN THE LAST STAGE OF A

LINGERING ILLNESS,

IN A SERIES OF

EVENING-CONFERENCES

ON THE MOST

INTERESTING SUBJECTS.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH.

VOL. II.

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TO THE CAUSE OF

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A D V I C E

FROM A

LADY OF QUALITY

TO HER

CHILDREN.

CONFERENCE X.

On FEMALE CONDUCT.

I HAVE long wished, my dear daughter, for this opportunity of freely conversing with you on subjects of the utmost consequence to you: your youth, the world into which you are going, the snares which it lays, and the few days which I have yet to live, all induce me to open my heart to you, and to give you some instructions relative to your peculiarly dangerous situation.

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If you could possibly entertain a doubt of my affection, the effort I am now making, when my soul is bowed down with sickness and sorrow, and sees nothing before it but the horrors of the grave, must needs convince you how earnestly I wish to secure your happiness: my wishes will never be realized, but while you are careful to lay down proper rules for your conduct, and suffer nothing afterwards to tempt you to break through them.

If you are so unhappy as to give yourself up to the distraction of the world, you will no longer be able to maintain the dominion over your own heart: you will live an utter stranger to yourself; and there will not be a single day which you will know how to dispose of in a proper manner. The world is never to be satisfied; the more we bestow upon it, the more unreasonable are its demands.

YOUR sex requires the utmost circumspection; what among *men* is reputed a venial fault, is an absolute crime with us. There are a thousand things said and done in their company, which a woman ought neither to hear nor see. I would wish that a young woman should be silent and modest; and the world, dissipated as it is, expects the same. Its judgment of us is very
severe.

severe; and it often fixes our character for life.

If you are over-solicitous to please others, you will run into a ridiculous affectation: you must make yourself agreeable to every one you converse with, without letting them see that you are thinking about it. Nothing pleases which is not natural. A woman who sets herself to draw the attention and admiration of all upon her, will soon become an arrant coquette, if she is not one already.

It is only a natural and virtuous behaviour which will secure to you esteem and approbation; if this should not succeed, so much the worse for those you meet with. Whatever happens, this truth is indisputable; that one of the brightest ornaments of the sex is modesty; and that a young lady can never appear to greater advantage, than when she is utterly divested of affectation in her behaviour.

Do not confound the ideas of modesty and timidity: the one pleases, the other distresses; we cannot avoid being hurt, when we see a young person confused and disconcerted. There is such a thing as an ingenuous confidence, which should make you not unwilling to speak, when the subject requires it; and to sing or dance, when a proper opportunity presents itself. If
you

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you are not vain, you will not be timorous to a fault.

I shall be very sorry for you, if ever vanity takes possession of your heart; for then, instead of being agreeable and communicative, you will be always unhappy in yourself, and your boldness will only serve to make you ridiculous to others; a disdainful carriage is that of a person of mean talents, and a bad heart; people of quality are less apt to assume it, than those of an inferior rank. We seldom endeavour to set ourselves off by pride, but when we have no other means of distinguishing ourselves; but this is only a ridiculous affectation, which the world always laughs at, but never forgives; the more humiliating our behaviour is to others, the more pleasure do they take in letting us down.

AFFABILITY will supply the want of those qualities which you do not possess: it is the best apology that I know for little imperfections. Great allowances are always made for one who has no pride or pretensions to superior merit: but self-love naturally raises in us an opposition to arrogance and presumption. Many women have become the subjects of satire, only by their haughty behaviour. Your figure is not without its share of elegance; and the handsomer a lady is, the more ready people are to suspect that she is vain.

THE

THE education I have hitherto given you convinces me, that the toilette will not engage your chief attention; you ought to spend as much time at it, as is necessary for your decent appearance in company. We must not fly in the face of fashion, or make ourselves remarkable by our singularity: but there are certain trifles in dress, which we ought to despise; those which make a woman a slave to her dress are fit only for such weak minds, as the present age, with all its attachment to trifles, hath not yet learnt to esteem:

LET your hours be properly regulated, and you will find time to worship God, and to pursue some useful study: you will then have no imaginary complaints; and will be an utter stranger to the miseries attendant upon idleness: A life well employed is always an agreeable life.

Do not think of amusing yourself with reading romances: it is a real malady to have one's brain filled with such ideas as they furnish: we never see things in their true light: they give us a taste only for ridiculous extravagancies, extraordinary adventures and marvellous sentiments: we insensibly adopt the language of self-importance and affectation, and become ourselves the heroines of romance.

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THE books you read should be as pure as your heart, and be reduced within a narrow compass. It is a mistake to pretend that our sex ought to *study*. We have no offices of trust to fill, nor any dignities to be invested with; and therefore we have only need to learn what is necessary to form the mind, and improve the understanding. Every learned woman clearly shews that the sciences do not belong to us: I never saw one of them that was not vain, decisive and affected in her manner of thinking, speaking, and acting.

YOUR attention should be directed to works of ingenuity, and you should learn the best methods of regulating a family, whenever you shall be settled in the world. You may perhaps be told that this is not a fashionable mode of education, but fashion must not be allowed to supersede duty. A woman, whose life is a perpetual round of trifles, is only fit to be made the subject of a comedy.

PRIDE persuades persons of a certain rank, that they live only to enjoy themselves. How should I be grieved, if you entertained such sentiments as these! pleasure ought only to be considered as a relaxation from fatigue; and must always be regulated and approved by virtue. Observe this rule, and you will see what sentiments we ought to entertain of the generality of
public

public diversions. I have so good an opinion of your understanding, as to think you would one day despise me, if I recommended them to you, as the means of giving you any solid satisfaction. If *one* innocent mind has been corrupted by them, that alone is sufficient to prove them dangerous; besides this, libertines speak highly enough of them, to make us suspect that they are rather of a mischievous than useful tendency.

As, to cards, played merely for amusement, and under the restrictions formerly mentioned, I see not why you should totally reject them; they ruin no one, they prevent idle conversation, they promote a social intercourse; and provided you use them with moderation, this is as allowable as any other relaxation; the same may be said of music; it is with great propriety considered as an accomplishment in a lady, and is often found of great use in those hours wherein we wish for amusement.

REMEMBER, my dear child, that an obliging behaviour is the very life of society. There is no one who is not pleased with a smiling countenance; a want of good humour would render you insupportable to yourself and every one about you. A reasonable soul ought always to be under the guidance of reason; the behaviour of a capricious mistress is a great discouragement

to

10 *ADVICE from a LADY of QUALITY*

to her attendants: if you would secure their affection, endeavour to deserve it.

My weakness, which daily increases, will not allow me to hope that I shall live to see you settled in the world; but it is God's will that it should be so; and to his good providence I submit: yet let me previously observe to you, that an amiable and obliging wife may almost always insure to herself a kind and indulgent husband. Let your affection be confined to him whom you have engaged to love; seek only to please him, and peace shall dwell in your house. If, in spite of all your care and prudence, things should not always go smoothly on, you will find a conscience void of reproach, the greatest comfort in the world.

KEEP yourself an utter stranger to intrigues; when we are faithful in the discharge of our duty, we have no need to have recourse to artifice and falsehood: the conduct of a virtuous woman never shuns the light: the more her character is enquired into, the better she is satisfied. It is a pitiable situation to live in a state of perpetual apprehension, and to have no better security against public shame than the prudence or fidelity of a domestic whom one has made a confidant. Nothing is so dearly purchased, as the confidence of low and venal minds: be connected only with women of the strictest virtue:

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it is our acquaintance which fixes our reputation.

If you should have children, do not part with them at that time, when the light of reason begins to dawn in their minds. Then it is, that the soul is capable of impressions which can never afterwards be effaced; then it is, that it must be filled with whatsoever can inspire it with the love of truth. How very imperfectly do they discharge the duty of a mother, who only see their children either to admire or to chide them? Reflect on the conduct of the fowls of the air; always engaged in the care of their young, they never leave them 'till they have taught them to fly. Are we less wise than these irrational creatures? One would think, by the difference in our conduct, that reason was inferior to instinct.

WHEN you appear thoroughly impressed with a love of your duty, you will have fewer admirers of your person, than of your virtue: there is nothing more disgusting than the character of a woman, who listens only to fulsome compliments; who only lies in wait for flattery, and whose behaviour on obtaining it is truly ridiculous. A well disposed mind treats every one with proper respect, and never loses its dignity, even when it is most familiar.

BE

BE always upon your guard against a professed wit; he is a critic, who often does us great mischief; if he is not satyrical, he is at least very forward, and his repartees are to be dreaded. Modesty is no objection to any person; and no one ever yet complained of it: to give your opinion, as if it were that of another, and to be silent, when your neighbour's reputation is canvassed, is a sure way to be loved and esteemed.

ABHOR luxury, and idleness; these two, which are the sources of every other vice, weaken and destroy the powers of the mind: study nothing more than a delicacy of sentiment and behaviour. Speak without affectation, and write without disguise. Nothing is so pleasing as the truth. The letters of *Madame de Sévigné*, which you cannot read too often, have never been without admirers, from their being so exactly conformable to nature; it is a sure sign of our want of wit, when we are always endeavouring to shew it.

SUCH is the advice, my dear daughter, which my own experience and my heart suggest; a knowledge of the world will supply the rest: this is a science, which never is forgotten, and which prevents our being deficient in any necessary point of behaviour.

YOU

YOU are doubtless surprized that, in a series of instruction, which comprehends the whole life, I should have said nothing on the subject of religion; but you will cease to wonder, when I tell you, that I reserve a subject, so interesting to your brothers and yourself, for another conference, when I have an opportunity of speaking to you all together.

YOUR father, whom you scarce remember, charged me to be particularly attentive to *your* education: tho' he is no more, he ought to live continually in your heart, by a constant love of virtue; this is the best way of recalling him to your mind, and of shewing your respect for his memory.

THE hour is at hand, when you will be an orphan; but you will be in the hands of God; he is more especially the protector of the fatherless; in other respects, you may depend on the goodness of your uncle, whose sentiments I well know; he loves you, and he is a man of the strictest integrity. He will consider you as his daughter; and will settle you in the world, so as to make you happy. With all my heart I wish you to be so; for it is impossible to love you more tenderly than I do. But enough for the present, my dear child; it is time for you to retire; and I am too much agitated by talking

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ing thus tenderly with you; your presence excites those tears, which my grief will not suffer to break forth:—I feel myself almost suffocated;—I would wish to recover my spirits, but am not able:—O! amiable child!—O! mother, deeply afflicted!

CON.

CONFERENCE XI.

On Study.

THOUGH the presence of your sister caused in me such emotions of tenderness, as almost entirely overcame me, yet I am not willing any longer to defer my admonitions on the love which you ought to have for *Study*: I perceive that I am hastening to my end, and I desire nothing more, than that, being reduced to eternal silence, I may find a place in your remembrance. This is the portion of a being, who has nothing more than a borrowed and most precarious life.

I shall not enter into a detail, which supposes a knowledge of the sciences, and of the learned professors of them: for besides that it was always my opinion that a woman ought not to study mathematics, or philosophy, that round of dissipation in which I have spent so great a part of my life, has left me little more than common experience, and some remembrance of what I have heard others mention on this head.

I should

I should imagine that you can never do better than devote to literary pursuits the moments which are at your own disposal: a mind which we neglect to cultivate is like a body which we do not feed: by reading, the faculties are enlarged, the memory is strengthened, and the imagination is enriched: but the principal point is, to distinguish what is worth reading, in the midst of so many works, as are continually making their appearance in the world; this choice is a matter of real difficulty.

MR. ——— to whose merit you are no strangers, and whom I have consulted upon this subject, is of opinion, that you should immediately have recourse to such writings, as tend to regulate the morals, and to form the mind: he advises your beginning with books of such a nature as will furnish you with sound principles on the most important obligations of life; such as will shew you the delusions of a sensual life, and the destruction occasioned by the indulgence of our passions; such as will elevate your minds, by making you acquainted with God and with yourselves.

WHEN you have first taken care to furnish yourselves with virtuous sentiments, you will diligently consult such authors, as have written on the subject of your profession; it being an unpardonable ignorance not to be well acquainted

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ed with whatever is the business of our lives: your uncle, who has been engaged in military service all his life, and who has studied all the arts and exercises of war, will be the best director in this respect; and will furnish you with the properest books on the subject: apply yourselves wholly to this study, and you will soon reap the fruits of it: a soldier who goes on only in the beaten track, without making himself thoroughly acquainted with the nature of his business, is little better than a piece of clock-work, which must be set in motion, and never deviates from the path assigned it.

AFTER this, you will learn to know the world: BRUYERE's characters, and ROCHEFOUCAULT's maxims will be found very useful to you: in these writers you will see the portraits of all sorts of men, both in their public and private capacity.

HISTORY is another picture which you should carefully examine: all the operations of the heart and mind are there described in the most interesting manner. BOSSUET's treatise on this subject is considered as a master-piece.

Books of mere amusement, which do not take their place till after those of instruction, are however necessary, by way of relaxation, to prevent fatigue. I know no romance

worth reading except Don Quixote and Tele-
machus; almost all the rest are either trifling,
or mischievous: fiction is never made use of
with safety; it either serves to embellish vice,
or to ridicule virtue.

It is very right that you should read the best
poets: poetry elevates the mind, warms the
imagination, and makes us perfect in the art of
expression; but care must be taken to study the
poets with discretion: prose, being less likely to
seduce the mind, is more proper for young per-
sons who suffer themselves too easily to be im-
posed upon: we can never be too much on our
guard against the glaring appearance of what is
falsely accounted beautiful: I have known many
people whose taste has been spoiled by reading
nothing but poetry: the rhyme seduces, the
harmony of numbers bewitches; and what is
oftentimes only fiction, passes for truth.

NEVER purchase books without consulting
learned and judicious friends; and remember
that it is not the number, but the choice of
books which really adorns and improves the
mind: the library of a military man is large
enough, if it contains two or three hundred vo-
lumes; they who have more, either keep them
for the use of others, or to flatter their own
vanity: how many noblemen are there, who
make no more use of their library, than
of

of their green-house ; seldom, if ever, entering into either !

I have heard it affirmed by a celebrated writer, that almost all modern works are only copies ; and that we ought only to study such as are originals : I am sorry this author is now no more ; because he would have given you the best information on this head ; but you will easily meet with other learned persons who will readily direct your studies. If you pursue the plan here proposed, you will divide into four classes all the books which you have any need of ; the first will include books on the subject of religion ; the second, books of instruction in your profession : the third, those which are proper to introduce you to natural and moral philosophy ; and the fourth, books of mere amusement. We never read to advantage, but when we read methodically.

THERE are other works, which we may run through ; such as, the daily, and periodical publications ; which may serve to give you a superficial knowledge of what is passing in the literary world ; and will prevent your being a stranger to what is talked of in company on these subjects : but always shew wisdom and discretion enough not to confound this kind of writing with those numerous publications, which good sense and religion equally disclaim.

IMPROPER reading is the ruin of young minds; forbidden books ought to be considered in the light of evil company. Neither the style of a work, nor the name of an author can excuse your reading either what is satirical or impure; vice is always vice, under whatever colours it presents itself. There are theatrical performances, so decent that we may venture to go through them, and so interesting, that we cannot help wishing to do it: be prudent, without affectation; and you will never have any vain scruples.

THE books, which you have hitherto read, are little more than the elements, and as it were the alphabets of science; those which you should hereafter read, ought to contain the knowledge of things, and sound reasoning upon them. There are different kinds of study appropriated to all ages and stations. The mind of an ecclesiastic demands a very different sort of cultivation from that of a man of the world.

THE generality of mankind are satisfied with being able to write and to speak well; but this is not sufficient for persons in your situation: your country requires that as soldiers you should be well instructed, so as to be able to give a satisfactory reason for whatever you do: you will moreover find in study the happy secret of not
being

being burthenfome to any one; and will have a perpetual fource of entertainment in yourfelves.

WELL chofen books are our beft friends; we find them always ready when we want them, and when judiciously chofen, they always fpeak the truth to us. It is a great happinefs to be able fometimes to endure folitude: we muft learn how to withdraw ourfelves from the converfe of men, as well as how to bear with it; we muft lay in a ftore of knowlege againft approaching old age: by reading, we enlarge the fphere of our underftanding; and we afterwards feel much greater pleafure in the midft of fociety: All thefe advantages will attend you, if you love ftudy, and cultivate your intellectual faculties.

YOUR father—alas! I would to God he were now fupplying my place on this important fubject! your Father has often told me, that in great towns a love of ftudy preferved him from a thoufand dangers, and that in little villages it ferved him inftead of company: be poffeffed of this refource; for knowlege is a treafure which no thief can ftéal: yet do not feek this treafure at the expence of your health: Immoderate application to ftudy exhausts the fpirits, and fatigues the mind.

TAKE heed also that learning does not make you positive or pedantic ; the more men really know, the less they affect to shew it. We make every man our enemy, whom we humiliate by an affected superiority : but he who regards his own interest, seeks only to make himself friends : if it be true that ignorance is despised, it is not less true that presumptuous knowledge is generally hated : an ostentatious display of learning never succeeds.

You must not expect to find study always agreeable : like the rose, it has its beauties, but is not without its thorns : the beginning of every science, as M. de Fontenelle observes, is difficult ; and nothing but assiduity and labour will enable you to taste the pleasures of it. I would recommend it to you to devote three hours at least in every day to study ; two in the morning, and one in the evening ; you are never to forget that you owe something to your rank in life, as well as to society ; and that it is with the soul as it is with the body ; excessive hunger and repletion are both injurious to it ; by the one it is famished, by the other it is over-loaded.

THERE is another inconvenience in an indiscreet love of study ; that it makes us too cold and philosophical ; it makes men behave in company with an air of too much gravity and absence ; and gives them the appearance of old men

men at the age of thirty. Accustom yourselves to leave your books, as we leave the company of our friends; seem to forget them, 'till you take them up again. The world, perhaps, is very little interested in what you read; so that probably what nearly affected *you*, might to *them* be perfectly indifferent; every one has his own particular manner of considering things. Our conversation with the dead demands recollection and application; but that which we hold with the living should be full of ease, and sprightliness.

If you are really fond of study, you will every where find an opportunity of gratifying your taste: the very grass on which you tread, and the insect which you despise, will serve to display the wonders of divine wisdom: accustom yourself always to travel with a common place book; a landscape, a monument, a ruin, every thing of this sort finds a place in the journal of a person of reflection.

THE knowledge of customs and manners is another science which deserves your attention: you will doubtless have opportunities in the course of your profession of seeing the different nations which surround us: war lays open every country to the observation of the soldier: you will then be able yourselves to mark the difference betwixt a Spaniard and a Frenchman, an
G 4 Italian

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Italian and an Englishman. But remember at the same time that in this variety there is something not unlike the parterres of a garden; in which each flower has its merit and perfection: it is a great error, to expect that all the world should be just such as ourselves.

I have nothing more to say on this subject: my knowlege of it is very confined, and my strength too much exhausted to be able to prolong this conference. You live in an age in which you will not want for directors, if you know how to chuse them: as for me, my chief study at present, is the contemplation of death: I perceive nothing but shades of darkness which surround me on every side: my tender regard for you indeed serves from time to time to disperse them, and opens to my view a gleam of light, by the help of which I behold you as the delight of my soul, and the very joy of my heart. Nothing moves me, where you are not concerned; but I am immediately roused, when your welfare is in question, and I at once forget all my pains and all my infirmities.

If my attachment is too strong, God, I hope, will pardon it: for he sees the very bottom of my heart, that it has only one desire, viz. that you may be truly virtuous: I will not say, I would sacrifice my life, to obtain this blessing; for alas! what would that be worth, at the
hands

hands of one, who has only a few wretched hours, or perhaps minutes to live? but this is most certain, that I never yet desired any thing so earnestly, as I wish for your happiness both in this world and the next.

I humbly hope that God will open the kingdom of Heaven to receive me; and I trust I shall hereafter see you with me there; the short enjoyment I have had of you upon earth, is not sufficient to satisfy my affection for you; I perceive it is yet too much alive to die with me.

ALAS! how much do we suffer, when the heart is so full of sensibility as mine is! But I must even divest myself of nature, if I would get rid of my sentiments of love and tenderness for my children.

CONFERENCE XII.

On the Clerical Character.

THE disorder of this excellent lady increasing, they despaired of her being any more able to discourse with her family; but it pleased God, that the symptoms abated, and her strength returned for a little while. Ever filled with the tenderest concern for her children, she embraced this opportunity of calling her son the *Abbè*, and thus addressed him:

You, my son, have made choice of a state of life very different from that of your brothers; the advice therefore which I would wish to give you, ought to be personally directed to yourself. My great comfort, with respect to the profession you have engaged in, is, that I have not overruled your choice; this encourages me to hope that God will bless you in it. You have more need than any other, of the gifts of heaven, because you have more duties to discharge: no instance of misconduct in an ecclesiastic is trifling or inconsiderable.

I am

I am but little acquainted with divinity, or with the books which you ought to study; but I know that your life ought to be a life of application; and that if idleness is a fault in us, in one of your profession it is a crime.

I know also, that the books which should engage your principal attention are not merely books of amusement; but those which treat of christian perfection, and the means which lead us to it. For how will you be able to direct others, if you have not yourself learnt the way?

Be careful not to be occupied too much with secular affairs: those ecclesiastics who have been so engaged, have never yet found it the way to procure esteem: they are indeed sought after, and consulted; but they are not really respected: we think, with reason, that their function should be sacred.

EXTERNALLY to renounce the world, and afterwards eagerly to pursue the concerns of it, is to assume a character truly ridiculous: the life of an ecclesiastic immersed in worldly concerns is inconsistency itself.

I say nothing to you of your morals; the most unfulfilled virtue is so essential to your profession, that he who is destitute of it is an object of detestation in the sight of God and man:
in

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in spite of the corruption of the age, a vicious priest is insupportable. Even the libertine is shocked, when he hears of the misconduct of a person, invested with your sacred character: all men expect, that they, who are required to set an example to others, should themselves be really exemplary.

WHAT can be more offensive, than the sight of a clerical *petit-maitre*, whose whole life is spent in ridiculous trifles? there is a certain decorum, which you cannot too scrupulously observe: I never saw an ecclesiastic, who affected to be a man of the world, that did not make himself contemptible: the company generally amuse themselves with such an one, as a bauble or a toy.

IF you would wish to be respected, your outward appearance must not contradict the nature of your profession: let all your purposes be honourable and prudent, and all your words be the interpreters of your mind: it is a certain indication of a depravity of heart, when we are not circumspect in our conversation.

SHUN hypocrisy and affected singularity: your situation is too considerable to have a part to act: appear to be such as you really are, and every one will respect you; affected manners suppose weakness or duplicity.

As for public diversions, consider them as prohibited to persons of your profession: an ecclesiastic is to be pitied, who cannot find sufficient employment and satisfaction in the duties of his function: I do not mean to exclude innocent domestic amusements among your friends, but an immoderate attendance on places of public resort, and above all things, what is called *play* in public, I look upon as criminal in a clergyman: one half of the company ridicules, while the other is offended at such behaviour; and all agree that it tends to the injury and discredit of religion.

In your apparel be neither careless nor finical: a graceful simplicity should distinguish a person, whose duty it is to recommend moderation to others. He, who endeavours to set himself off by an undue conformity to the world in his dress or manners, appears to be ashamed of his profession: he is a kind of amphibious creature, who being neither fit for the church, nor for the world, has something monstrous in his appearance: We are not fond of inconsistencies either in men's outward behaviour, or in their minds: he who is not consistent in his conduct is like an actor on the stage.

THE fashions of the world are not designed to be adopted by priests or magistrates; the gravity of their character must be shewn in their manners

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manners and in their dress. Impertinence is despicable in any one; in persons consecrated to the priesthood it is odious: what must one think of a clergyman running from morning 'till night from one circle to another? the world laughs at him, religion weeps for him.

I need not say, that you cannot be too circumspect in every thing which concerns the ordinances of religion; one doctrine of which, you well know, cannot be attacked, without materially injuring the whole; a priest, who should himself be wretch enough to treat them with contempt, must be considered as one that holds himself up to ridicule and just reproach.

CONSIDER it as your duty to frequent the society of the most learned and virtuous men: their conversation reflects light upon us; and we insensibly copy after their manners. Be cautious in your behaviour to the female sex, avoiding all offensive levity: it fares with the reputation of an ecclesiastic, as with a mirror; the smallest blemish destroys its beauty.

LET your library consist of the most celebrated books, and delight in reading them; an ignorant clergyman is a man who makes sport for the public; one who dishonours religion, and whom all men despise.

RATHER

RATHER be afraid, than ambitious, of heaping up benefices and dignities; at least never try to obtain them by adulation or intrigue: he who purchases by mean compliances the highest preferments in the church, loses oftentimes his honour, if not his soul: merit alone ought to recommend an ecclesiastic, who knows what his profession demands of him, and is disposed to conform himself to the duties of it.

BE always ready to open your heart and your purse to the wretched: and especially, if you are largely provided for, consider your riches as intended for their benefit. There is nothing so opposite to the tenor of the gospel, as a covetous or ambitious priest. Your own patrimony will be sufficient for you, if you are not addicted to luxury and excess; it is this which almost always reduces men to poverty.

AIM at simplicity in your furniture and in every thing that is external: let your virtues be your principal ornament, and be indifferent about the rest.

LET not pride ever take possession of your heart; it is the characteristic of a weak mind, and the surest way to become hateful to others. There is no one who is not charmed with condescension and sweetness of behaviour: but if this were not the case, how is it possible to reconcile

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concile a haughty disposition with the precepts of the gospel?

SUCH, my dear son, are the instructions, which I thought it my duty to give you; every one of them is dictated by love, and an earnest desire of promoting your happiness. The seminary, in which you have been educated, must needs have inspired you with a love of study, and a veneration for religion: never forget the principles there imbibed; often reflect, that a person of your character ought only to appear in the world, for the sake of improving it. His faults are by no means confined to himself; they furnish all who see them with a pretence for strengthening themselves in their wickedness, and persisting in it.

You must remember, that the conduct of your brothers ought not to be a matter of indifference to you: your profession engages you to point out to them their duty, and to remonstrate, if you find them negligent of it. But, to give weight to your admonitions, you must set them a good example, and you must administer reproof with tenderness and discretion: reprehension is always ill received, if the severity of it is not wisely tempered with expressions of affection and humility.

YOUR

YOUR father, who was always intent on the welfare of his children, would have taken every method of enabling you to do the highest honour to that profession, which you have chosen : may God who has taken him from us, be himself your conductor and guide ! cleave stedfastly to HIM, in the faithful service of whom consists all our glory and our happiness.

CON-

C O N F E R E N C E XIII.

O n P R I D E.

P R I D E, my dear children, being almost inseparable from an exalted situation in life, I think it my duty to set before you the folly and danger of it. Be assured it is this, which hath carried every species of luxury to its present height, and hath made it the idol of almost every rank. We impoverish ourselves merely for the sake of outward shew; and every possible shift is made to *cut a figure* in the world.

WE are anxious to conceal our common original, and that common destiny, which puts us all upon a level: we endeavour, if possible, to persuade ourselves, that a rich man is quite a different creature from the rest of mankind, and that there is no such thing as real greatness in the world, inseparable from riches and honours.

THE effect of such a persuasion is, that virtue has no charms to engage our affections; it is a
shade

shade which we avoid, that we may bask in the sunshine of fortune, whom with idolatrous veneration we adore.

WE have seen the luxury and pride, which abound at this time in our cities, begin and increase in such a manner, as to ruin the most opulent families: we have seen that simplicity exploded, which distinguished our ancestors, and rendered their manners so amiable and respectable. Their descendants very soon began to be ashamed of their plain attire, their humble accommodations, their venerable portraits; nothing was any where to be seen but a profusion of expence, in building magnificent houses, and purchasing the richest dresses, and the most superb furniture.

WHAT extravagance do you not see in this respect? I am sure it often astonishes you; and you are thoroughly sensible of the folly of it; and cannot but perceive how greatly our morals suffer by it, and how bitterly virtue laments the effects of it.

WHEN we grow familiar with vanity, and make it the object of our love and pursuit, the soul is regarded as a thing of nought, and the body is in a manner idolized: we torment and even ruin ourselves only for the sake of this, and think of nothing but dazzling our eyes with ornaments,

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naments, gratifying our ears with concerts, and our taste with all kinds of meat, however luxurious and expensive.

It is pride which produces effeminacy; and which prevents our ever moving but in equipages, ever sleeping but on beds of down: it is continually inventing new pleasures; it enervates the mind; and renders even the stoutest men, little superior to women both in their dress, and in their general turn of life.

O! my children, place this picture often before your eyes; and let it prevent your giving yourselves up to pernicious luxury: my former propensity to this foolish vanity is the cause, why I am not better able to speak to you on the subject; but it has also enabled me thoroughly to discover its emptiness and folly. My own reflections convince me, that we forget we are rational, or even human, creatures, and fancy that our wealth is only given us, to procure whatever tends to the gratification of our passions. Luxury is an abyss, which swallows up the greatest estates, and which we are never able to fathom: the fashions which it studies, and the trifles which engage its attention, are so many occasions of our ruin.

Be truly great, and you will never be vain: you will know, that there is a certain propriety
to

to be found between the two extremes of avarice and prodigality; and, it is this which ought to regulate your table, your dress, and your equipage: you will know, that pride in making us vain, renders us ridiculous; and that when this prevails, we see young men effeminately devoting themselves to the toilette, and passing half their time under the hands of the hair-dresser: you will then find them as seriously engaged in determining the colour of their cloaths, the size and shape of a shoe buckle, and other such trifles, as if they were matters of the most serious importance.

If you give yourselves up to pride, you will be slaves to these idle vanities; and you will thereby weaken the force of that manly virtue, which you naturally inherit from your worthy father.

BESIDES this, you will have every kind of whim and caprice to gratify; you will find numbers ready to supply your demands, by advancing you sums of money: you will be told, that to be in debt is no reflection upon the character of a man of quality; and you will be encouraged to multiply debts, and to ruin your fortune. Every day furnishes us with examples, which confirm this truth. How many persons of immense estates outlive their income, and find themselves surrounded by domestics, whom they cannot

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cannot pay; by creditors, who are for ever worrying them; filled with remorse which perpetually torments them; and reduced at length to a state of extreme indigence and necessity!

SUCH are the effects of pride; it carries us headlong into every kind of extravagance, and presents to our view a house, the furniture of which is not yet paid for, the domestics full of discontent, and the master of the family himself at his wit's end, being no longer able to find creditors to trust him.

THESE, my dear children, these are the miseries which you must expect to suffer, if ever you give way to the suggestions of pride: but even supposing it did not carry you to this extremity of distress, I need not say more to dissuade you from it, than that it will tend to rob you of your virtue, make you regardless of the miseries of your neighbour, and fond of all those effeminate indulgences, and that ridiculous parade which the world encourages, and so strangely admires.

I should not do justice to your father, if I did not observe to you that he was generous and even magnificent according to his circumstances; but a noble simplicity, and a prudent œconomy peculiarly distinguished his character. His uncorrupted manners rejected all those expensive trifles,

trifles, which an unreasonable fondness for luxury has rendered fashionable: the love of his country so engrossed his affections, as to leave no room for vanity in his heart.

EVERY wise and virtuous person considers luxury as the source of all kinds of iniquity: he knows, it is in the school of pride that we learn to despise the poor, to harden our hearts, and to seek after every refinement of pleasure: we cannot bear the sight of an object that is disagreeable to behold, we cannot breathe but among perfumes; we cannot exist, but in the midst of softness and pleasure.

It is a great misfortune not to be able to distinguish betwixt the superfluities and the necessities of life; our passions are so many tyrants, who allow us no rest, 'till we have found the means of satisfying their demands. Hence we see, that those among the great, who listen to the dictates of pride, are really in a state of slavery: they are absolutely dependent on fashion, in the most trifling circumstance of their lives. If any article is defective in the midst of all their splendor, they are distracted, they lose all patience; they appear to be so entirely taken up with external ornaments, with finery and parade, that they seem to live for no other purpose, than to gratify a restless appetite for trifles.

WHEN

WHEN we visit persons of this turn of mind, we do them *the honour* to be utterly regardless of themselves, that we may give our whole attention to their furniture: we speak to them only of what is every where around them; we attend only to that which dazzles our eyes; as if we meant to give them to understand, that if they had nothing to exhibit, more worthy of our notice than themselves, they must be contented to live in perpetual solitude.

SURELY, my dear children, there is nothing very captivating in such empty characters as these; yet such is the glory of those who live in subjection to luxury and pride, that they are not regarded on their own account, but merely for the sake of their table, and their show. As a proof of which, if they lose their riches, they instantly sink into contempt; it is hardly remembered that such persons ever existed: How different is the state of those who are really virtuous! whatever misfortunes befall them, they never want a panegyrist or admirer, but are universally regarded and esteemed. History furnishes us with a thousand instances of persons, whose merit, without any other support, has been respected even in the lowest obscurity: such is the power and influence of truth!

WHICH of you then, my dear children, would not rather embrace a virtuous poverty, than

than be satiated with luxuries, and be destitute of virtue? I am persuaded that neither of you would hesitate a moment, in the determination of your choice.

If my health would suffer me to enter more particularly on the subject, I could shew you other evil effects of pride; and particularly, —that it attracts to itself persons of the most trifling and insignificant character: Look at the house of such a one as I have been describing; and you will find it filled with those pretty gentlemen, whose whole life is spent in ruining their fortune and their constitution. You will find it to be the rendezvous of gamesters; (for gaming is an inseparable appendage to persons of that turn of mind, which I have been describing :) in short, luxury has there displayed her utmost charms to ruin those very people, who are studious to support her empire in the world.

AN elegant simplicity will deliver you from the society of men of such licentious conduct, among whom virtue almost always suffers shipwreck. Where pride prevails, religion is despised; an immortal spirit cannot accommodate herself to those perishable objects, which tend only to chain her down to the earth.

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Do not imagine that luxury is instantaneous in its growth : it has its beginning and its progress : at first, it is no more than a desire of having our houses more elegantly furnished, or our persons more fashionably drest than others of our rank : the love of fashion insensibly gets the ascendancy over us ; 'till we think nothing agreeable, in which there is not an air of elegance and novelty. Scarce is this first step taken, but simplicity becomes insupportable : we despise a man whom we see indifferently cloathed ; and we annex the idea of supreme felicity to idle and fantastick pleasures.

We cannot but hold pride in the lowest contempt when we reflect, that every one of this disposition enjoys the blessings of society, without contributing any thing towards its advantage — he deprives the community of many useful members — does not properly discharge any duty whatever — and dies, without leaving any memorial, except of the riches which he has wantonly consumed.

LUXURY engages all the world in her service ; you would think there would be no artificers or manufacturers without her ; and that the arts, the elements, and the seasons, must become tributary to her. 'This it is, which overwhelms the luxurious man with pride, and makes him believe that he is lord of the creation.

I earnestly

I earnestly hope these considerations will make a due impression on your minds. Look on her without prejudice, and you will see that the pride which is so idolized, is more transient, than the cloud which passeth away; you will see, that there is nothing good to be expected from a man enslaved to vanity, and sunk into effeminacy.

THAT swarm of *petits maîtres*, whom every man of sense despises, owes its origin only to pride; which fills them with the love of themselves; and thenceforth a new race of beings makes its appearance on the stage, exposing their vanity to all around them; and burthening society with all the charges of their existence.

BUT there is another dreadful effect of pride; which is, that it gives birth to those idle and mischievous books, which are continually publishing to the world: and which, however harmless they may be thought, tend to vitiate the taste, and corrupt the morals. How many young people have been utterly ruined by improper books? If idleness and the love of pleasure had not taken possession of their hearts, they would never have quitted that happy simplicity of manners, which inspires us with a love of truth, and teaches us to shun evil and pursue good.

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THERE is yet another thing which I wish you to observe, namely, that you will insensibly lose your strength of mind, whenever you give yourselves up to the influence of pride: and what a ridiculous character is a soldier dissolved in luxury, and totally enervated? there remains nothing more of him than the shadow of a body, and an effeminate mind, to which the slightest hardship is a most insupportable evil. Accustomed to sleep under a richly-decorated pavilion, to feed on the most delicate food, to be attended by a number of servants, he is either disqualified for the necessary duties of a soldier, or he carries to the camp a train of luxuries which are ruinous to himself, and render him a bad example to others.

SURELY, my dear children, you would not wish to be soldiers, merely to live in ease and splendor: were this the case, you would be loaded with reproaches; and your pride, far from procuring you respect, would only bring you into contempt. A *petit maître* is entirely out of his place, when he is called into the field of battle: his whims, his particularities, his delicacy, all serve to render him unhappy in himself, and ridiculous to others. He is pointed at as one, who rather acts a part, than is really such as he ought to be.

YOUR

YOUR good Father has told me a thousand times, that those fine gentlemen who are wholly taken up in admiring themselves, and in doing nothing but running from one circle to another, and absolutely devoted to the business of the dressing-room, were always considered as officers of no consequence or authority, whom the meanest soldier held in contempt. They can dance indeed, and they can sing; but they cannot fight; both because the art of war demands something more than mere personal courage, and because courage itself is weakened by the love of pleasure.

LOOK at the portraits of your ancestors; take notice of their suits of armour. Think ye, that the delicacy of the present age would have had any charms for them; and that they would have admired an officer scented with perfumes? Alas! how ingenious are we, only to make ourselves despised!

LEAVE pride to those who being suddenly grown rich, and struck with seeing themselves become men of consequence, and encircled with flatterers, place all their merit in gilded furniture, and splendid equipages. Neither a virtuous man, nor a man of quality has any need of luxury to set him off. It is a great reflection on the present age to suppose that it only esteems men according to outward shew: whereas he alone is

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worthy of respect, whose character is distinguished by a noble simplicity.

BESIDES, how many real inconveniences do we suffer from this expensive turn of mind? Every part of our life favours of an uniform profusion: we are subject to a thousand forms and ceremonies; we are forced to pass our whole time in acting a part: we are surrounded by false friends, insolent servants, and almost always with anxiety, with debts and diseases.

It is very seldom that a man given up to pride and luxury knows what sobriety is. Physicians have observed, that all who live to the full, are subject to indigestions and apoplexies, and that it is this abundance which generally shortens their lives. We no longer regard our conduct, than while we live in a state of sobriety: as for pleasures, they are the chief executioners of the human race.

I thank heaven, that my health has enabled me to talk with you to-day with less difficulty than usual: you must have observed that my days are not all alike; and that oftentimes my spirits are depressed by the weakness of my body. I have now dwelt largely on my favourite subject of prudence, sobriety, and moderation; and if I have appeared tedious in my reflections, impute it to that tenderness, which makes me
insensible

insensible of my sufferings, and which gives me new life, whenever I am endeavouring to instruct you.

IN vain is death making daily advances on my emaciated body; in vain doth he every day rob me of a considerable part of my substance; I think myself in perfect health, while you are with me: all my concern is to know how to endure the instant of our separation. I perceive the advances which it makes; yet I find, at present, no resources in my own strength to fortify me against that affecting moment.

BUT perhaps—alas! I only deceive myself; I feel nothing but death approaching.

THE physician coming in, the children withdrew, and gave way to those effusions of grief, which the presence of their mother had suppressed.

THE lady, having been at church in the morning, returned about eleven o'clock; and having summoned her children, she said, “I am just come from visiting my burial place, and from looking with my dying eyes on the sepulchre of your father. O! what pain has it given me to go through this dismal ceremony! But I was willing to humble that pride, which conceals from us what we are; and which would

prove your ruin, should you not be careful to guard against its illusions. When we are brought up in the midst of human grandeur, it is very difficult to persuade ourselves that we are like other people, and that the brightness which surrounds us will soon be dispersed like a vapour. In the mean time what have we, whereof we can justly glory? Alas! though you were nobly born, you came into the world weeping, helpless, and naked; and you must go out of it not less destitute of riches and honours. In vain will the world then offer you, whatever is magnificent and flattering to your vanity: all this will pass away like a dream; and the grave will swallow up all your riches, and pride, and greatness.

IN my visit to your father's tomb, I saw nothing of all that glory which accompanied him on earth, and of all that homage which was paid him: consigned to a little spot of ground, where silence and horror prevail, he has only a marble monument which already begins to be effaced, and which would scarcely be seen, if we were not purposely directed to it.

Is this, then, said I to myself, all that remains of the busy tumult of the world? Is it to this, that nobility of birth, and the most brilliant fortune leads us?

YES,

YES, my children, this is the sum of all our expectations, as to any thing earthly, whatever riches and dignities you enjoy. Death will place you on a level with the meanest of our fellow creatures; it will reduce you to dust similar to their's both in weight and value: keep then your eyes ever fixed on this period of human greatness.

IT is this which will teach you, that you are nothing but frailty; and that the pride, which is almost inseparable from an exalted station, is the perfection of folly. Notwithstanding all the privileges of your birth, all your titles, and all your advantages, you cannot command a moment's existence: amidst all your grandeur, you are in the power of the lowest men, of the elements which govern you, of the diseases which threaten you, and of a thousand accidents, which you cannot foresee. Your soul is as subject to sorrow, and your body to pain, as that of the meanest slave; and the poor peasant, whom perhaps you despise, enjoys the same sun, the same climate with yourself, and has the same faculties of sight, and taste, and perception.

WHY then, my children, should such a difference be made betwixt persons alike in so many respects? Is it because there is such a disparity in their birth? No: every one knows, that we all have one common father, that our origin is from

the earth, and that many a man owes his eminence of station to instances of meanness, if not of downright wickedness.

Is it because they are consigned to live by the labour of their hands? In this they only fulfil the obligation universally laid upon mankind. Is it because they are meanly cloathed? Alas! what objects of pity are we, if we value ourselves upon being covered only with the spoils of brutes and insects!

WHAT connection is there betwixt that silk which is the produce of a worm, or that gold which we dig out of the bowels of the earth, and an immortal spirit? surely we cannot make that splendor which is only borrowed, the subject of pride and vanity. The poorest of our fellow creatures hath a body, a soul, and a spirit, as well as we; from whence we ought to conclude that he is our brother, and that we are much inferior to him, in spite of all our grandeur and ambition, if he has more virtues or nobler sentiments than ourselves.

HENCE learn, that you ought never to despise any one; and that he upon whom you look down with disdain may perhaps be endued with a more generous mind than all those great men of the world, who while they value themselves on account of their superiority, are really objects

jects of pity. How many are there, who, if they had an opportunity of shewing their abilities, would, by their genius and attainments, eclipse those men of fortune, that look down upon them with disdain? And whom the patronage of one man of rank, or one fortunate circumstance might have raised to that degree of honour to which their abilities entitled them.

It is therefore neither obscurity of birth, nor poverty, which lowers us in the eye of reason; but it is pride, because there is nothing which is in reality so abject, as this vice and its effects. It is always an indication either of a mean spirit, or a corrupt heart. How can we despise others, without casting at the same time a reflection on ourselves? But were this not the case, what I pray you, do you think we lose of our riches or our quality, by receiving with a gracious air all who approach us, and by addressing ourselves with condescension to our inferiors!

ALAS! the man who is foolishly puffed up with a sense of his own importance, loses every thing by his haughty air, and his imperious mode of behaviour: for he loses the confidence and esteem of mankind, which is the most valuable possession in the world.

MEN of inferior rank are generally a match for those among their superiors, who treat them
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with contempt; for they are scarce out of their sight, before they ridicule their whims and pride, and make them the subject of their pleasantry and satire.

O! my children, if ever you should despise the least of your brethren, if ever you should treat them with disdain, you would dishonour the memory of your father. He never thought himself great, but when it gave him an opportunity of obliging others; and in him the weak and indigent always found that kindness and relief which they sought; he removed their sorrows; he answered them with gentleness; and if he found himself constrained to refuse them what they asked, he plainly shewed, how much concern it gave him.

REMEMBER that your elevated station stands in need of the assistance of men of inferior rank to support it; and that, if you had not people in subjection to your commands, you would lead a life of the most dreary solitude, and of extreme indigence. Some labour to supply you with food, others offer you their personal service; and it is their presence and assiduous attendance which forms your train, and renders you an object of public notice.

WE are therefore enemies to our own interest, when we despise those, on whom we are
so

so dependent for assistance. The generality of great men are respected only in proportion to their retinue ; so that they owe almost all their consequence, to the very persons, whom they do not regard. O ! how happy is it for us, when we know how to do justice to ourselves ; when we have judgment enough to estimate ourselves according to our real worth ?

NOTHING can be more dreadful than this arrogance of mind, which, carrying a man beyond the limits of an earthly being, renders him the scourge of every one about him. Might not you, my children, have been born the children of a peasant or mechanic ? and if this was not your lot, can you assume any merit to yourselves on this account ? as to mental endowments, however penetrating, or extensive you may suppose them, they are no more than a glimmering light, too often ready to mislead you ; and which oftentimes shines only at the expence of sound wisdom. Men of the greatest genius are continually committing the greatest faults : where wit is predominant, discretion is seldom found.

THE more closely a man examines himself, the more ready he will be to acknowledge his weakness and infirmity : it is only with respect to our immortal part, that we are truly great : but in order to deserve this character, we must
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be raised above our passions, and especially above pride. It is a vice which we ought not to know, except that we may avoid it : it mars our best actions ; and leaves to him who is possessed of it, nothing but what is mean and ridiculous.

ONLY observe the man who is wrapt up in himself, and is full of the admiration of his equipage and his gaudy cloaths, and you will perceive a degree of emptiness in him, which you cannot but pity. The poor vain creature labours for no other purpose, than to make himself contemptible ; while only a smile or an obliging look would conciliate the affections and win the hearts of all with whom he converses. An air of affability and a word of kindness is sufficient to gain a thousand praises and a thousand thanks. From which you may conclude, that every man of quality, who incurs the hatred of others, thro' the neglect of that, which would cost him so little, either a look, or a word, or an air, is in effect a dupe to his own pride, and really a very despicable being.

O ! my children, to whatever rank fortune may hereafter raise you, never forget to shew the utmost condescension in your whole deportment. All mankind vow vengeance against those, who think themselves raised above their fellow-creatures, only to aggravate the miseries
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of the wretched, to overwhelm them with the weight of their pride, to make them the sport of their capricious humour, to oblige them to a painful attendance in ante-chambers, where they are wearied out with impatience and disgust. Every species of greatness which is thus assuming, is nothing better than absolute tyranny.

To one who contemplates, as I do at present, the Majesty of God, how foolish as well as criminal doth the pride of man appear ! how sensibly should I be afflicted, if I foresaw, that you would hereafter behave yourselves with insolence, and become distinguished by your haughty and imperious deportment. But I am persuaded this will not be the case : you will rather endeavour to imitate the courtesy and affability of your father ; and I trust you will acquit your mother of arrogance, if she should venture to urge her own example, as not unworthy of your imitation in this respect.

HEAVEN, which knows my most secret thoughts, knows that I desire neither riches nor honours for you : if ye are only good men, you will be always sufficiently great.

O ! my beloved children, if you could penetrate into my inmost thoughts, you could not doubt of my sincerity ; I consider this union of hearts as the only means of being always together.

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ther. Death may indeed destroy the body, but it has no power over our affection: this is my comfort, when the idea of our approaching separation depresses my spirits: it is then I have recourse to my intelligent and immortal principle; in whose love and affection, as it were in a sanctuary, you are to live for ever, and make part of my happiness. It is then, I console myself with reflecting that I shall not be absolutely deprived of you; but that in spite of all the ravages of death, I shall retain you in my mind and my affections. The triumph of the cruel tyrant will only be partial: under this persuasion that our union is indissoluble, wonder not that my prayers to God are incessant, that he would preserve you, and pour down his choicest blessings upon you.

THE more I think of you, the more I find myself interested in all that you have, and do, and are; and it is this, which heightens my affection to an inexpressible degree, that you are my own flesh and blood. What stronger motive can there be most tenderly to love you!

I may truly say, I forget every other thing for your sakes: nothing except my children's welfare hath any longer a place in my heart. It is natural therefore for me, to avail myself of the little time I have to remain upon earth, by seeing as much of you as possible.

EXCUSE

Excuse me, I pray you, to my friends, when I am departed hence; tell them, that the duties of a parent so far surpassed every other, that I confined my attention entirely to my family, to give ease to my mind, and discharge my last duties; assure them, that they had nevertheless a great share in my regard, and that the remembrance of their kindness dwelt on my mind to my latest moment: thank them for the attention which they have ever shewn me; and which I am very sensible was more than I deserved.

THE sad commission which I am giving you to deliver to my friends, is like conversing with you after my death: ere long you will hear your mother spoken of, as a shadow that is departed; you will then recollect all my tenderness, and do justice to my love,

CON-

CONFERENCE XIV.

On FRIENDSHIP.

I EXPECT the return of every evening with all the impatience that can be conceived: neither the temporary relief of medicines, nor the chearing light of the sun affords me any consolation; nothing can do this, but the happy opportunity afforded me of seeing and conversing with you. You will hardly believe that I reckoned every hour of the last night; only grieving that they did not pass with greater expedition, in order to hasten this pleasing interview: surely my tenderness for you exceeds the bounds of reason; otherwise I could not presume, in my present situation, to wish, that the time should pass with more rapidity than it does, when so very little remains for me: but let us improve that little; and let us discourse this evening on the necessity of prudence in the choice of friends.

If we are right in saying that a true friend is a treasure, we may be equally sure, that a false one is a monster. He abuses the confidence we place in him, to our ruin, and makes sport of the
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the affection which we shew him : there are hypocrites in friendship, as well as in religion.

BUT there is, nothing, my children, more agreeable or useful to mankind, than friendship ; without this, the happiest life leaves a vacuum which can never be filled ; there are a thousand cases in which we have need of counsel or assistance ; a thousand situations in which we have no comfort but in the sight of a friend ; he is a support under every difficulty ; a *Mentor*, to recall our wandering steps.

GENTLENESS of manners, and a compliance of disposition will secure to you all the blessings of friendship ; but if you are not upon your guard against external appearances, you will run the risque either of having false friends, or of having no friend at all.

YOUR choice must not be determined either by an agreeable countenance, or a lively turn of conversation, or a brilliancy of wit ; we are often ensnared by these exterior accomplishments ; but experience will teach you, that there is nothing so deceitful as words and looks.

YOU must penetrate into the very soul of him, whom you wish really to know : if you listen only to the public voice, you will find your judgment equally divided betwixt satyr and panegyric,

ric, and you will not know which side to take. I never knew a person, who had not his share of good and evil report. While some commend him, others blame him; and it is almost always prejudice, which determines both the one and the other.

BUT how, you will ask, shall we get at the heart of him, with whom we seek to be united in friendship? Your own understanding will teach you the way: that will make you attentive to those words and actions, which are purely natural, and unpremeditated, and which unfold the inmost recesses of the heart. That will teach you to watch the prevailing inclination of the person whom you wish to take into your bosom; and to attend to his different pursuits and connections: that will shew you in the mirror of the mind, I mean the eyes, whether there be sweetness, anger, or pride in him.

It is easy to study others, when we have been accustomed to study ourselves; but unhappily this self-enquiry is too much neglected: we read, with eagerness, books on every subject; but we do not give ourselves the trouble to search into that instructive volume, the human heart: thus it deceives us every moment; and makes us pay dearly for our negligence in this matter.

BUT

BUT how great advantages would arise from this enquiry? We should know the origin of all the evil that we do; we should learn by what means our prevailing passions are most easily attacked; and we should have none but real friends.

LIBERTINES and gamesters have those qualities, which would only serve to ruin us: Not to mention that they are levity and inconsistency itself, they communicate a love of vice, and take a pleasure in making proselytes, like themselves. Every vicious man seeks to justify his conduct by the authority of others; and this he hopes to effect, by making converts; as if it were in the power of a multitude to determine virtue to be vice, or vice virtue.

It is not in the circle of irregularity, or in the lap of pleasure, that you will meet with minds susceptible of true friendship: for she is prudent and discreet; and young men enslaved to their passions are intemperate and precipitate: you need not see them more than once to know them thoroughly: they commend nothing but pleasure; they admire nothing but dissipation; they speak of nothing but what is injurious to religion and morality; all which are the strongest arguments against the admission of such persons into your friendship.

If

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If you should make choice of one that is fond of play, he would soon persuade you that his passion is a certain resource against dullness and misfortunes; that the gaming table is the rendezvous of the best company; that it is very agreeable to make such great interest of one's money; 'till, in short, he prevails, and you are undone. Connect yourself with a man of pleasure, and he will tell you there is no happiness but in sensual gratifications; and in the end will pervert your understanding, and corrupt your affections: one insensibly becomes wicked, by conversing with such as are wickedly disposed: this is an opinion, which is confirmed by reason and sad experience.

AN ill-disposed friend involves us in every kind of misfortune; and the wounds which he gives us are so much the more dangerous, because he often goes down with us into the pit which he has digged for us. His kindness ensnares us; and though we see we are the dupes of his folly, we have no longer resolution to oppose it.

I have already exhorted you to leave the choice of your friends to virtue, which will preserve you from these dangers. She is intelligent without suspicion, and has the best means of discovering the truth; such a choice is too important to excuse our inadvertency and neglect.

How

How many are there whose fortune or whose virtue would have been ruined, had it not been for the assistance of a friend ? he becomes their guide ; he shews them a safe and easy way, and his directions are attended with the most happy effects. We easily suffer ourselves to be persuaded, when it is Friendship that speaks : she knows the dispositions of the heart, and discovers herself in spite of every cloud and every impediment.

How happy will you be, if ever you are blest with a real friend ! he will be a living book, in which you may read your duty ; and your own affection being joined with his, there will be only one mind, and one will betwixt you : when we are united by generous sentiments, we mutually encourage each other to every thing that is good : there is something sacred in friendship, when it is animated by virtue.

BUT we must not expect to find true friends, if we do not use our utmost endeavours to deserve them : there is nothing more common than to hear people complain of the scarcity of friends, and nothing more rare than to see them studious to cultivate friendship. We are not apt to think, that friendship is a commerce, which must be carried on at a mutual expence.

Do

How

Do not accustom yourselves to call any man your friend, whom you have not proved, and whom you do not know to be such: be honest, sincere, and agreeable yourselves, and I will be answerable for it, that the blessings of friendship shall be your's. We form connections too hastily, to have real friends, and we change them too often, to know their value: there is too much levity to be met with every where, and only the shadow of friendship to be seen.

WHAT a dismal state is it, to wander about the world, without a creature in whom we can safely confide! to live always in reserve with those whom we converse with. A true friend delivers us from this restraint: he is of more value to us, than all the world without him. While we see, and converse with him, we think of nothing that is removed at a distance from us.

I myself experienced the blessing of a friend, in one, whom Providence threw in my way, when I was young: her counsels, and her excellent virtues, first began to shew me the folly and vanity of a dissipated life. I trust her goodness towards me has not failed of its reward! were she now alive, she would supply my place to you: my eyes have a thousand times bestowed the tribute of a tear upon her, and to my latest breath, I shall not cease to regret her loss.

It was in the friendship of this excellent woman, that I learnt to raise my mind above the trifles of the world, and that I found by experience that our happiness chiefly depends on the choice of a friend.

INDEED, my children, a virtuous person, to whom we can at all times with safety unbosom ourselves, is of more use to us, than either books or conversation; when we are agitated by our passions, we seek an asylum in his breast, and find that tranquility, which we so much want.

ONLY make your observation on two faithful friends; listen to them, and you will find in their language and their sentiments a degree of candour and benevolence that will charm you; if they descant on the emptiness of earthly honours, it is the voice of reason; if they give an account of their affairs, it is done with the utmost openness and integrity. They adhere closely to the dictates of virtue; the strongest supports the weaker; the wiser instructs the more ignorant; each is content with his own measure of knowledge, and in this little society, neither wishes to have the pre-eminence.

I should not say so much on the subject of friendship, if it were not so absolutely necessary in human life. Of what service may you find

Vol. II. I a friend,

a friend, amidst the perils of war! It is very possible that he may save your life; we see instances of it every day: your uncle can inform you, that after a bloody battle, he found himself fallen among the dead, and that the Count de * * * *, instigated by friendship, came to see if there were any signs of life in him, and delivered him from the hands of those who were preparing to bury him.

You are now arrived at a proper age to think of making such friends: a friendship begun in our youth, is a band not easily to be broken. Experience will teach you, that the generality of persons, whom you meet with in the world, are only fit for the intercourse of common civility; and that the number of those, among whom a friend is to be chosen, is very small. Let this choice be directed by reason, as well as the affections, and you will never then have cause to repent of it.

WE are never more sensible of the true value of a friend, than when we labour under any sickness or misfortune; the courtier passes by, and does not remember that he ever saw you; the man of the world sends to enquire after you, and proceeds no farther: but the real friend risks every thing; nay, quits every thing, to assist and comfort you; he divides himself, he multiplies himself; he knows no greater pleasure than

than in opening his heart, and discovering the sincerity of his affection: we are always ready to disclose our hearts, when we have nothing but virtues to shew.

HEAVEN grant, that these reflections may imprint on your minds those sentiments which friendship inspires. This is the wish of your best and dearest friend, who delights in seeing you, whose heart is transported with pleasure in conversing with you! I am already absolutely dead to the world; it is only in you that I seem to live and breathe. O! my too tenderly beloved children! to what an orphan state are you now about to be reduced? where are the persons whom you will hereafter call by the sacred name of friends? how happy should I be to know them? how extremely dear would they be to me? I should consider them, as supplying my place in your affections? I should conjure them to be for ever attached to you, both out of tenderness for you, and compassion for me.

ALAS! my whole soul is disordered by such reflections as these: all my thoughts are thrown in confusion; and nothing remains to me but the pain of losing you; a pain, which has yet a mixture of pleasure, even while it overwhelms me; and which, indeed, I would not but feel, for all the world.

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THAT ever I should be destined to experience such a contrariety of sensations! my heart seems to be divided, and my soul is in a state of distraction: my tenderness is agitated at the same time by sentiments of a quite different nature: what a strange situation! My love of my children, whilst it heightens my joy, embitters my sorrow. If my affection is properly returned by you, I shall have abundant reason to be satisfied; yet do I still lament your fate.

CON-

CONFERENCE XV.

On the COURT.

AS it is my design to give you some instructions in relation to every circumstance of your life, I think I ought to say something to you on the subject of the Court. The spot which you will have occasion most frequently to visit, is the most respectable part of the kingdom, as being the residence of the sovereign. There it is that the hearts of all his subjects should be fixed; thence it is, all favours and benefits are wont to flow.

BUT you must know that self-love and our own interest being the first mover in almost every action, they who frequent the court are carried thither by motives of ambition, and a thirst for promotion: this is the center, to which every thing tends; it is here that the vehemence of desire, and the flame of passion are kindled: here it is that courtiers pine away with envy and impatience; and there is no one who does not feel himself in an uneasy situation:

on: one is afraid of losing his place, another is apprehensive that he shall get nothing; and as neither of them will venture to utter his real sentiments, either that he may not expose himself, or that he may not reveal his secret, they both live in a state of perpetual dissimulation.

THIS accounts for our finding more suspicion and mistrust at court than any where else; and hence it is, that it is the place in the world in which men are least apt to express their thoughts and inclinations. When this precaution does not exceed the bounds of prudence, we cannot but commend it; but when it degenerates into duplicity, it is doubtless a very great fault.

EXPECT then to find within the precincts of a court, only persons of very great prudence or dissimulation; and to see only looks, whose meaning you cannot understand: they often laugh, when they have great cause to weep; and often weep, when they have occasion to rejoice; they publicly praise their enemies, if they happen to be favourites at court; and they censure even their friends, if they chance to be out of favour. Fortune is the compass by which the course of their friendship is directed; the thermometer, which shews the degree of warmth

warmth or coolness with which people are to be addressed.

You will see that neither openness nor freedom are the current coin of this place; and that the only way to maintain your ground there, is to pay a proper respect to all, but to place confidence in none; never to say the least evil of any; because the weakest has power to hurt; to confine yourselves within your proper sphere; and to have nothing to do with intrigues or cabals; to ask no favours, or at least to use the utmost discretion in asking them; to give no occasion either for panegyric or satire; equally to avoid the haughty appearance of pride, and the mean artifices of flattery; to preserve at all times an evenness of temper, and never to shew too much sensibility: people are apt to mistrust a man of wit and humour; they suppose that he is always designing; and they suspect that what he says is not sincere.

LAY down these maxims for the direction of your conduct, and I will venture to assure you, that whatever dangers may attend the court, it will have none, to ensnare you. It is not the path of ambition, which I am pointing out to you, but that of an honest man, who seeks only to get the better of his own faults, and only aspires after true happiness. The ambitious man hazards all for all: if his exaltation may render

him conspicuous, his fall may be utterly destructive to him: whereas with virtue and a generous moderation we leave fortune to act as she pleases, neither coveting her favours, nor dreading her frowns.

It is doubtless a very pleasing situation to be honoured with the confidence of a royal master, and to be employed in his name to partake of the concerns of government. But how much trouble and disappointment must you expect, before you arrive at such a post of honour! And what perpetual inquietude must you suffer to maintain it! you will not have a moment that you can call your own; your time must be wholly devoted to public affairs, and you must be intent on justifying the choice which your sovereign has made of you, by incessant industry, and by an unwearied anxiety for the general welfare.

I have seen enough of the court, and of the manner of courtiers, to be able to assure you, that no one there is happy, but he who desires nothing. Is it not a sufficient honour and privilege to be permitted to approach our prince, to be known by him, and to have it in our power to shew by our assiduity, how much we love him, and how desirous we are to serve him?

WHEN

WHEN we are only engaged in consulting the interest of our King, we find a court the residence of true greatness and virtue; but when we think only of our own interest, we find there nothing but intrigues, and jealousy, and dissimulation. It is not the sovereigns, or their family, which render the court a place of danger, but the faulty passions which we carry thither, and which an ambitious desire of advancement puts in a state of fermentation. A prince cannot see every thing himself; and as the greatest part of his courtiers are accustomed to disguise, his court does not appear to him such as it really is.

You must above all things beware of learning there that political refinement, which has not the least connection with truth; that fondness for luxury, which plunges us into idle expences; that effeminacy which enervates both the body and mind; that haughtiness of spirit, which knows no pleasure but that of depressing others. A good disposition will imitate nothing but virtues; bad examples serve only to render it more circumspect and attentive to its duty.

If it be true, that a court has its inconveniences, it is no less true that it has also great advantages; it is the centre of true politeness; it is the residence of the purest language; a certain mode of behaviour there prevails, which

is not elsewhere to be found, and which characterises persons of quality. It is there we become acquainted with the necessary forms, and what is usually called *etiquette*; the manner of behaving ourselves with gracefulness, and of expressing ourselves with propriety; of receiving others with dignity, and of writing with elegance and ease. You will not have continued there long, without learning the art of being polite without impertinence, reserved without stiffness, steady without rudeness, and grave without affectation. Courtiers say many things in few words; they know every thing, yet pretend to know nothing; that is, they are so guarded, that you can neither guess what are their real sentiments, nor quote their authority for what they say.

CHOOSE those characters for your examples, which are most generally esteemed: there are always to be found at court, venerable peers, whose company is the school of honour and integrity; respectable ladies, whose example is a lesson of virtue. These are the persons, to whom you will do well most intimately to attach yourselves: you will gain their good will by listening to them with attention; by constantly frequenting their company; by a well-supported conduct, and by modesty and discretion. The court is only dangerous to those who give themselves up to pleasure or ambition; we can every
where

where find bad examples, when we give ourselves the trouble to look after them.

If you should have a place at court, you will do well to remember that it is only borrowed; and be always ready to resign it: this will be the surest means of confirming you in it, and of securing you from any fear of revolutions. Courts are like ground that is undermined: when we think ourselves most secure, we are in the most imminent danger of falling in.

If you only appear there to pay the respect, which is due from you; if you are only anxious to procure esteem; behave yourselves with politeness to all the world; and above all things avoid the character of news-mongers or banters; the least degree of raillery is always ill received. The court is the residence of extreme discretion; they are always talking there, without affirming any thing.

THERE is no place in the world in which there is more wit; and in which it is more dangerous to shew it. Shew nothing there but plain good sense; that you will find is the way to commit no faults, and to have no enemies; we cannot be too circumspect, when we live in the midst of a world, in which every thing is seen, and every thing is blazed abroad.

NEVER

NEVER boast that you have interest, if fortune should give it you: either you will be beset by dependents, whose applications you must refuse, and which a good heart suffers greatly in refusing; or you must be always asking favours, and thereby weakening your own interest.

AVOID the society of intriguing women; they almost always ruin those, whom they appear to protect: their counsels seduce: they fan the flames of ambition; and all they aim at is to form parties, of which you will at length become the victim.

PAY no regard to the friendship, which they profess for you, or to the questions, which they will not fail to ask you. Their friendship may be sincere, but it may perhaps be insidious; and in a matter of doubt, prudence prescribes, that we steer clear of danger. There are too many jarring interests at court, to think that people there are disinterested.

WHAT I am now recommending to you is not craftiness, but prudence: you will not be less the friends to truth, for knowing how to hold your peace, and act with reserve: it is a kind of policy which religion allows, and which it calls by the name of discretion.

WE find fault with the court, as being the region of toilsome attendance and fatigue; and not without reason, when we give ourselves up to idleness and pleasure; but if you are fond of reading, and make temperance the rule of your conduct, you will find yourselves as happy there, as in any other place: satiety belongs only to those who pursue sensual pleasures alone, and who wish to be always enjoying them; let your happiness center in your own minds, and it will always then be at your command.

BUT enough, my children, on this subject; Experience will teach you the rest; she is an admirable instructress; and it is to her I refer myself, every time I converse with you. But it is impossible for you to conceive what agitation my mind sustains, while I am giving you these directions for your future conduct: I cannot help wishing to look into futurity, that I might know whether the counsel which I give you is exactly such as will be of use to you hereafter; or whether you will be disposed to follow it at all. I am always thinking, and therefore it is no wonder that I am incessantly repeating, how dreadful is the situation of that mother, who wishes to attend her children thro' their whole life, but is obliged to leave them, who is earnestly desirous to know in what manner they will hereafter conduct themselves, what will become of them, and yet cannot, with all her efforts of foresight

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forefight and tenderness go one step beyond the present hour.

It is a melancholy reflection, that I am at this time anxious to give you advice for the regulation of a life, which perhaps will very soon be taken away from you. Who knows, alas! but that the first campaign may carry you off, in the midst of all your hopes, and in the flower of that youth, of which you are at present in the full enjoyment. Some unexpected accident may perhaps open your tomb, almost as soon as mine is shut. Such are the sad reflections, which distract my mind, arising doubtless, in part, from the increasing weakness of my outward frame. They hang over me like a thick cloud, which I am unable to remove.

To my own lot I am no stranger; all my solicitude arises from my ignorance what will be your's: O! that death would execute all its power upon me, rather than torment me with these melancholy thoughts, which cast down my soul, and fill me with perpetual disquiet.

HEAVEN has ordained, my children, that I should be taken away from you at a time, when I am deeply impressed with a sense of my duty, and am exceedingly desirous to discharge it. Alas! how many mothers are there, who live in perfect indifference about their children! How many

many mothers, who only regard their pleasures; while I have only one reason for wishing to live, that I might be of use to you; and that I might be instrumental in preserving you from those dangers, to which your youth is about to be exposed.

GRIEVOUS indeed was the stroke, when it was the will of heaven to deprive you of your father; it now seemeth good to the same unsearchable wisdom to double your affliction: submit therefore in all humility to that dispensation, which not the most costly sacrifices, nor all that your affection could possibly prompt you to bestow, will be able to avert.

BUT what do I say? you may perhaps imagine that the prospect of death disquiets me; whereas death hath utterly lost its sting; you will not I hope suspect that I am unwilling to submit to the will of Providence, all whose designs I humbly and reverently adore: pardon, gracious Lord, the expiring efforts of parental affection, which overcomes me, in my present state of languor and decay.

CONFERENCE XVI.

On the LOVE of TRUTH.

THE subject of this evening's conversation shall be that infallible characteristic of a generous mind, the love of truth. You cannot but know; that nothing is more detestable than falsehood; and that whoever deviates from truth is held in utter contempt.

BE assured, my dear children, you will no longer be esteemed, than while you strictly adhere to truth. The world, corrupt as it is, never yet spoke of a liar with respect; it even protests against those flattering compliments which lead us to commend those that are unworthy of praise: so certain is it, that truth is always acceptable, and that her rights are never to be invaded with impunity.

WHAT would you say of me, my children, if you found that the affection which I profess to bear

bear towards you, were all dissembled, and that my words were the language of imposture? That the regret which I have expressed at being removed from you, and seeing you no more, was merely the effect of artifice and insincerity? Doubtless you would be offended to see me trifle with truth, and prostitute parental affection: but be assured the contrary is true: each word that I utter is the dictate of sincerest love; nor do I think it necessary to justify myself in this respect.

ALAS! of what use would it be to me to assume the character of an anxious or afflicted mother! This would be far enough from giving you pleasure: nor can I have the least interest in imposing upon you: if I wished to do it, in order to make myself of some consequence in the world, death is about to remove me from it; and I have nothing here below to expect, but the stroke it is about to give me.

CONSIDERED in a very short time to the regions of eternal silence, I shall neither know what is said, nor what is thought of me: none of the concerns of this life will any longer affect me, except perhaps the love which I bear you; and which will then, I hope, be perfected in endless joy, on seeing you again, received into the regions of eternal life.

THAT

THAT truth, which is so amiable and conspicuous upon earth, is no other than an emanation from, and as it were the image of the Deity: and the reason why we hold it in such high estimation is, because we know that it proceeds from heaven: how great is its beauty, how clear its light, when it penetrates the heart and soul! From the moment of its entrance, the mind becomes the seat of equity and candour: all writings which are destitute of truth, are calculated only to mislead; all men who disregard it in their manners or discourse, are objects of our pity or contempt.

LET truth then be the guide of your conduct, the first principle of your actions, and I am very indifferent about any thing more: you will not then suffer yourselves to be seduced by evil customs, or bad companions: your character will not then be marked by dissimulation and duplicity; your words, and looks, and actions will be uniformly true.

YOU have happily chosen those stations in life in which truth is more particularly indispensable: a soldier without the strictest honour, and an ecclesiastic without the most rigid veracity, are men so truly infamous, that they are looked upon with indignation. Honesty knows but one kind of language. When we have recourse

course to equivocal expressions, we no longer deserve to be esteemed strictly honest: we are not indeed obliged always to speak all kinds of truth; but we are never allowed to speak any thing which is not true.

It is because men are too apt to lose sight of these maxims, that the world is full of flattery and insincerity: you may observe that unfortunately there seems to be a kind of emulation in the art of deceiving one another; and that almost in every company the shocking custom is but too prevalent of praising people to their faces, and censuring them the moment their backs are turned. This species of treachery has always been exceedingly offensive to me; especially because the party so treated, being absent, is unable to defend himself: it is cutting a man's throat, without allowing him the possibility of crying out for succour.

YOUR father, whose example I always propose to you with pleasure, because I well knew his excellent qualities; your father, I say, had an utter abhorrence of liars and evil-speakers; he considered them as birds of prey, which only seek to surprize and devour: the liar lays his snares, the slanderer stabs you with a dagger.

O! how

O! how amiable is truth! her empire ran parallel with the Golden Age: the tongue was then the faithful interpreter of the heart; then mutual love prevailed, and each party expressed it without disguise. The world, as it grows old, grows more corrupt; the very nature of truth is changed; and falsehood too often dwells on the lips even of those, who have had every advantage of education. What in fact are all idle compliments, but the art of saying agreeable things, which mean nothing, and of lulling people into an utter insensibility of their faults? I would by no means have you rigidly severe, but I would never have you sacrifice truth to complaisance. Truth is an inexhaustible spring, from which innumerable streams are derived, whose purity may be defiled many different ways. Some depart from it by equivocation; some by mental reservations; neither of them recollecting, that to be a lover of truth is the greatest ornament of man.

SUCH language, I well know, would be incomprehensible to meer courtiers; but I hope I am not giving instructions to persons, who are ambitious of that sort of life. The principles, which I am inculcating, will never lead you thither; if they do, my instructions must be strangely misunderstood. Nothing would affect me more, than to know that my children would
be

be mean flatterers, capable of deceiving their master, and of betraying the interests of the public. The very idea fills me with horror. No: heaven, I trust, will not suffer ambition to take such possession of your heart, as to lead you to any unwarrantable excess: that you may never run into it shall be my constant prayer; and your good dispositions give me cause to hope that my wishes will be accomplished.

If you improve in knowledge and virtue, as I hope you will, you will be sensible of the importance of keeping your word, and never contradicting your real sentiments: what is it but to act in two opposite characters, when we outwardly approve what we inwardly condemn?

If he who is regardless of truth knew what he loses by his want of uprightness and integrity, he would account himself unworthy of society: it is impossible to esteem such a person; no one ventures to entrust him with the most trifling secret; and even when he speaks the truth, he is not believed. Other vices may be concealed, but falsehood is almost always discovered; and oftentimes the liar is betrayed by himself.

RECEIVE instruction on this point from those old officers, whose names are an honour to their profession; and you will know how to regard truth as she deserves. It is in their school we learn,

learn, that our life itself is not too dear a price to lay down, in her behalf; that esteem is the companion of integrity; and that every promise which we make without performing it, is an instance of falsehood which deserves to be punished.

IN proportion as I enter more deeply into reflections upon death, I discover how necessary it is to regard truth. No person in my situation can avoid most highly respecting her, and renouncing every species of falsehood and dissimulation. They may indeed be found in books, or in society; but in the eyes of those who stand on the brink of the grave, they are lighter than vanity itself. Such persons esteem nothing more than truth. Adhere to it, my children, as long as you live, and the blessing of heaven will rest upon you: hate evil speaking; and be as slow to believe, as you are backward to utter, any thing to another's disadvantage.

TRUTH affords the greatest delight to a person of a liberal mind: he finds it in himself, and among all his friends; because he is connected only with such as are pure and upright like himself.

ALL I have to add is, that if a single instance of falsehood would establish your fortune,

tune, you ought to prefer a life of indigence before wealth so dearly purchased. Honour and religion unite their influence in recommending this love of truth; it may not perhaps be altogether fashionable to think and act thus; but your lives are not to be regulated by the dictates of fashion.

THE exertion of my spirits in conversing with you on these interesting topics may perhaps hasten my death a few days: but what is such a loss to a mother, who would freely sacrifice ages for your good, if she had them at her own disposal? I know I can only remain upon earth, so long as I continue to live in your hearts; and that the way to do this, is to store them with my sentiments.

RESTRAIN your tears, I beseech you; and let me not suffer what is worse than death, by seeing you overwhelmed with excessive grief: it is enough for me to die myself, without seeing you in danger of being the victims of immoderate sorrow on my account. It is true you will very soon be orphans; but you will be the peculiar objects of the divine protection: his providence never fails to watch over those, who apply to him for succour, with an honest and upright heart.

I have lived about nine and thirty years; and there have been thousands, whose lives
would

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would have been more useful than mine, that were not permitted to live near so long. I should have been too happy, if I had lived to see you settled in the world, and had chosen myself the part which you were destined to perform. Gracious heaven! whither doth this reflection carry me? O! painful affection, which adds to the weight of my sufferings, and imbitters the dregs of the cup of death!

CON-

CONFERENCE XVII.

On BROTHERLY LOVE.

UNDER an hourly apprehension of death, I am astonished to find myself again conversing with you. Who can less reckon upon the return of to-morrow, than one who is already reduced to a skeleton? It is the will of heaven, that the undue attention, which I have formerly paid to this wretched body of mine, should be recompensed by my being an eye-witness of its total decay: wherever I turn my eyes, I see nothing but the sad tokens of my approaching dissolution.

THERE are however some instructions which I yet wish to give you; and that which I intend for the present is not one of the least important: it relates to the harmony which ought to subsist betwixt you all, and without which, you must never expect any peace or comfort in each other. I have therefore called you all together, because the present subject of my instructions equally concerns you all: this union

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only can repair the loss you will sustain by the death of your parents, and it will deliver you from a thousand inconveniences and embarrassments.

ALL families go to decay when they are distracted by law-suits: they are torn asunder, they devour each other, they mutually wish each other's ruin: where a cordial affection does not subsist, there is nothing but confusion: I have seen the greatest families reduced by this to the lowest indigence: a wretched self-interested spirit had sowed tares in the heart of each individual belonging to them.

It is covetousness which embroils the nearest relations; for the sake of a little pelf, men are contented to break the bonds of consanguinity and friendship; whereas the treasures of the whole universe are not worthy to be compared with the happiness of living in peace and unity. Alas! poor mortals of a day, how solicitous are they about their earthly concerns, as if they were to dwell upon the earth for ever!

WITH what deep concern should I be filled, if I foresaw that my property could possibly be the occasion of strife betwixt you? I should in that case wish with all my heart, to have no other inheritance to leave you, but peace and virtue; but I flatter myself, *meum & tuum*, that
wretched

wretched distinction which so often separates chief friends, will never be allowed to interrupt your friendship. Nothing ought to be so inviolably united as brotherly love.

SPRUNG from the same parents, brothers naturally contract the most intimate union from their very birth: this friendship often grows up amidst their exercises and their sports; and increases, as their hearts unfold themselves, and their affections are enlarged: an husband has not always known his wife; oftentimes indeed he knows little or nothing of her before marriage: but brothers and sisters have had the same cradle, the same examples, the same instructions, and have lived in the same way; so that they are doubly to blame, if any matter of interest is suffered to divide them. The more inducements we have to live in union, the more clearly do we demonstrate the evil disposition of our hearts, when we give the least encouragement to dissension.

If ever you should be tempted to disagree with each other, you will do well to estimate, what it would cost you to support your animosity, thro' the forms of a tedious and expensive law-suit; and I will answer for it, that you will never be induced to carry matters to this cruel extremity. Alas! the voice of consanguinity is not suppressed with impunity: she always main-

tains her rights, and a generous mind can never forget them, without doing the utmost violence to itself.

I have ever observed with the utmost satisfaction and delight your affectionate disposition towards each other; and I am persuaded that the harmony which hath hitherto prevailed betwixt you has been as much the effect of congenial sentiments, as of your own good sense. I thank heaven for it, and I earnestly beseech you to preserve this concord uninterrupted. Remember, that if it is conducive to your present advantage to be united, it will not less contribute to your future satisfaction; the longer such an union continues, the firmer it will become, and the more sensible you will be of the blessings which attend it.

ALAS! how many unhappy families are there, who, having broken the bonds of friendship, are restrained, by a false shame, from mutual concessions, for the sake of restoring peace? self-interest must have a strange ascendancy over our hearts, before the early impressions of love and friendship can be thoroughly effaced, so as to cool our affections towards those whom we once cordially loved.

I declare to you, I feel in my heart so many reasons for the love of a brother, that it does

not

not appear to me possible to entertain any sentiment like aversion towards him : if I am mistaken, I hope you will always be in the same error with myself.

O ! if you once taste the pleasure of an intimate union with each other, nothing can be equal to your satisfaction ; your harvests will be crowned with peace ; your property will be in a manner common ; there will be only one heart and one soul betwixt you. We despise brothers who quarrel with one another ; and chicanery employs all her arts to ruin them both.

VIRTUE is only to be found in the regions of peace and love : every kingdom divided against itself will be brought to desolation. Rather give up a portion of your goods, than forfeit the blessings of peace : this example was set you by your father ; he chose rather to recede from his just rights, than to engage in a law-suit with his near relations ; such conduct is highly worthy of your imitation.

WE are all ready enough to bewail the dismal effects of those wars, which, for the sake of an accession of territories, plunge whole nations into the depths of misery and destruction ; and yet for a few yards of land we persecute each other without remorse ; can there be a greater inconsistency than this !

THE world abounds with persons, who, inheriting the estates of their friends, neglect to discharge the most sacred duties, in order to gratify their boundless desires: the departed friend is no sooner interred, than they seize on his effects with the utmost eagerness, and insist on the privilege of plundering his house. Could I think you capable of such rapacity, I would rather wish that you should take possession of every thing I have, while I live, than dishonour both yourselves and me by quarrels after my death. My riches are your's; and I should really be pleased to have you make an immediate division of them among yourselves: I shall want very little for the short time I have to live.

THERE is something horrible in the love of money: it breaks the strongest ties; it is utterly regardless of the cries of the wretched; it despises the censures of the world; it leads us into the greatest crimes. When we thirst after riches, we despise virtue as a thing of nought: even the soul itself is disregarded, when this passion is predominant; hence so many estates indirectly obtained! hence so many instances of inhumanity to the distressed!

BUT what is a palace, however brilliant, in which there is neither peace nor virtue? it is the seat of tumult and wickedness in the eye of reason:

reason: how much better is it to dwell in an humble cottage, and enjoy the blessings of concord and tranquility!

THE riches, which we acquire by dishonest means, are seldom of a long duration: heaven oftentimes, no doubt as a punishment for the possessors, causeth them to pass away like a vapour: every inheritance becomes in some sort unlawful, when we only possess it by dissolving the ties of flesh and blood.

I thank God, that covetousness never took possession of my heart; I always considered that vice, as the portion of a base mind. If your sentiments are not sordid, you will think the same: the love of your relations will appear in your eyes far preferable to all the treasures in the world; and you will never think yourselves truly rich, but when those who are nearest allied to you are your best friends. What a comfort is it to live in the midst of those of our own family, without discord, without mistrust, and to be able to find within the circle of our own relations all the assistance we stand in need of? This indeed deserves the name of true happiness.

WHAT can I do more, my dear children, to inspire you with the love of unity and peace, except it be to desire you will approach the couch,

on which you see your mother almost expiring ? In this very room it was, that I implored the mercy of heaven towards you, the moment you were born ; that your souls might be filled with wisdom and benevolence ; and hither must you direct your eyes, that you may incessantly recall the powerful motives, which ought to unite you to each other. Consider these walls as ready to witness against you, if you should ever presume to violate the bands of fraternal affection.

As for you, my beloved daughter, I recommend you most earnestly to the kind attention of your brothers, who, I trust, will pity the dangerous situation of your tender youth, and always continue inviolably attached to you : and do you, on your part, never forget, that your happiness will entirely consist in cultivating their friendship. Reject with scorn the advice of such, as would ——— But I must cease ; a cloud this moment overspreads me, which darkens both my visual and intellectual sight ; adieu ! ——— my anxiety for you will prove more fatal to me, than the disease, under which I labour : it urges me to speak, at a time when the extremity of my weakness will not suffer me to proceed ! What a struggle betwixt them both !

C O N-

CONFERENCE XVIII.

On RELIGION.

A DAY in my present weak state is too precious, to be passed over by me, without employing it in discoursing with you on the subject of religion; in explaining to you what it is, and what are the demands which it makes upon you. I am thankful for that measure of divine knowledge which hath taught me, that nothing can equal the happiness of being engaged in the service of God. Be assured, you will never be happy, but while you live in obedience to his laws.

ALL the instructions which I have hitherto given you, would be very defective indeed, if they did not lead you to Christianity. An honest and an amiable man are only sketches of virtue: religion must fill up and finish the picture.

I will not enter upon a discussion of the several kinds of religious worship: it is sufficient to say, that we believe Christianity to be established on the foundation of reason, scripture, and

truth; and that they, who have presumed to level their attacks against it, are scattered as the dust before the wind. This is a fact which history will sufficiently attest, and of the truth of which you will be thoroughly convinced, if you read it with attention: it is only the strength of our passions which blinds our sight in this matter.

I never knew a man of real virtue decry religion; men only attack its precepts and instructions, because it prescribes mortification and self-denial. The libertine condemns religion only to revenge himself on it for the restraints which it lays upon him: he is like a man who, having been cast in a law-suit, endeavours to defend himself, by accusing his judges of partiality and iniquity.

If ever you listen to such people, or read their idle objections to the truth, you are undone: your hearts will soon be corrupted; like the heart of that fool upon sacred record, who presumed to say in it, "There is no God." We begin with listening to blasphemy, and we finish with uttering it ourselves.

WHEN I am tormented with frightful apprehensions on this subject, my comfort is, that you have had the blessing of a Christian education; I recall to my remembrance those holy sacraments,

sacraments, whereby you have been initiated and strengthened; those instructions by which you have so often engaged yourselves to serve your God with fidelity. All these considerations fill me with a confident assurance, that my children will continue faithful members of the church in which they were born and educated, and never dishonour her by an immoral or irreligious conduct.

INDEED if I had any doubts in this matter, I should weep incessantly for you; my soul would be cast down with the most horrible inquietude, and I should be ready to curse the very day in which I brought you into the world. I should no longer be a mother, most tenderly attached to her children, but a wretched woman, that had given them up, to vindicate the honour of God. Oh! how infinitely are both you and myself indebted to Him! how wonderfully doth He vouchsafe to comfort and support even me, who am but dust and ashes! How, good heavens! can I sufficiently acknowledge this great mercy!

It is the Christian religion alone, which intimately unites us with the Deity. While we walk under the direction of her light, we are in no danger of losing our way; we find her present in all our necessities; she never forsakes us in any of our distresses; she makes us amends

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for all the losses we sustain; she attends us even to the grave; in her bosom we live, in her arms we expire,

RELIGION sanctifies our actions, and furnishes the soul with infinite consolation, by setting before it the hope of an everlasting recompence. In what deep distress should I now be involved, if, being about to lose you, whom I love a thousand times more than myself, I had no resource in the treasures of heaven! a fatal despair would seize upon my soul; I should sink into the horrors of annihilation, and should expire full of rage and fury.

BUT, O my God, the confidence which I have, that I shall see and enjoy Thee, calms my grief, and assures me that in Thee I have what is much more precious to me than the whole universe, even more than my children themselves, though so exceedingly dear to me.

THUS it is that our holy religion flies to our succour in the midst of evils; the more afflictive they are, the more abundant are her consolations. How happy will you be if you observe her maxims! nothing can then hurt or trouble you. You will perceive the hand of God in every occurrence of your life, however trivial in appearance: you will acknowledge his wisdom in every leaf that shooteth, in every insect that creepeth,

creepeth, in every grain of dust, that you tread under your feet. You will know that He is the author of life and death, that He directs our thoughts, listens to our sighs, enables us to behold and to declare the wonders of his providence.

How many days, alas ! have I passed without reflecting on these truths ! The world is a stream, which always carries us away far from God and from ourselves.

IN the eyes of the man of this world, religion is a mere engine of state policy : the wit treats it as a fable ; but to him who listens to its dictates, and learns from it to renounce his passions, it is no other than truth itself. Consider it as your duty to become acquainted with religion ; she fears nothing, except that men should be ignorant of her excellence.

IN vain hath imposture painted Christianity in the falsest colours ; it cannot name a single error, which she approves ; or point out a single truth, which she condemns ; nor can an instance be produced of any one who ever repented of being a Christian. Self-reproach is the portion only of those perverse men who scoff at religion : scarce doth a fit of sickness seize them, but they smite upon their breasts in despair, and bewail their impiety. The moment of death is that of truth :

truth : if religion would tolerate vice, they who are now her bitterest adversaries would represent her as lovely, and delightful, and earnestly espouse her cause.

I need not tell you, that it is not necessary to practise works of piety, in order to perfect the character of an *honest* man ; it is sufficient for this purpose merely to abstain from injuring your neighbour : but honesty is always in danger of being lost, when it is not supported by religion. When we do not admit into our system a Deity, who takes cognizance of our actions, and who will either reward or punish us, we live like brute creatures ; we give the reins to our lusts in every action, which we hope will escape the eyes of men.

ONLY observe those unbelievers, who live without faith and hope : attend a little to their words and actions : their system of morality is abominable ; and if their manners are corrupt, this is only a necessary consequence. The fear of man is not a sufficient bridle to restrain us ; it may sometimes hinder evil actions ; but it lays no restraint on evil desires.

IRRELIGION leads to all kinds of excess : in her estimation the most horrid crimes are softened into gallantry ; and the soul itself, O ! horrible imagination ! that soul, which was created
in.

in the image of God, is only a particle of matter, which death is about to annihilate! See to what height this new philosophy raises us! you cannot consider it without horror.

Is it possible, Lord; that my mind should be filled with such exalted ideas of thy perfections, with so ardent a desire of being for ever united to thee; and that after all, my lot should be that of a crawling insect? Is it possible, that religion, the practice whereof is so holy; whose outward appearance is so amiable; which has filled me with so much comfort; which inspires me with so much resolution in the midst of my sorrows and afflictions; is it possible, that such a religion should be a mere illusion and chimæra! Away with such deceitful dreams! My flesh may decay, and my tomb open itself to receive me; but I foresee a never-ending life awaits me; and the God, whom I adore, will crown me with unspeakable joy, if I am so happy as to depart this life in his fear and love.

O! my dear children, this idea already fills my soul with transport; methinks I already see time end, and eternity.—But suffer me a moment to give up my whole attention to this sublime subject; suffer me for a while to forget the world, and to think only of heaven.

HERE

104 *ADVICE from a LADY of QUALITY*

HERE the lady continued lost for some time in the depth of her reflections; but afterwards recovering herself, she resumed her discourse.

NATURE has certainly made you more dear to me than any other creature in this world: but religion is an additional tie of affection, by which you are still more strongly united to me. When I reflect on our alliance by consanguinity, I consider you as children fashioned and formed within me, of whom death will very soon deprive me: but, as children stamped with the image of God himself, and destined to live with me for ever in the regions of eternal happiness.

WITHOUT such ideas as these, so capable of raising and comforting the soul, a mother knows nothing superior to that sort of fondness which the brute creature shews towards its young: affection, which is merely earthly, is nothing more than pure instinct: whereas religion purifies parental love, and gives it a continuance which will never have an end.

LEARN hence, my dear children, that whatever you do without having heaven in your view, will be always mean and unworthy. Earth has not a point, on which an immortal being can rest: whatever it has to offer, must needs perish with it; and whatsoever perisheth, is as nothing.

WHEN

WHEN a soldier is thoroughly persuaded of this truth, he is a thousand times a better officer for it. He does not wait to be seen by men, in order to acquit himself with valour: he knows that he is seen of God, and that is sufficient for him. A true Christian is never faint-hearted, when he is doing his duty: he is persuaded that religion has placed him in his post, that she requires him to die for his King and country, and he is always prepared to obey her commands.

ALL my comfort, amidst the ravages which infidelity is making, is, that you are of such rank, as only to associate with persons of quality. Liberal minds seldom protest openly against religion: it is only in the company of low persons, or those who have had no proper education, that impious conversation prevails.

GOOD God! what pleasure can a Christian find in ridiculing the sacred truths of Christianity? what credit can he gain in reviling the religion of his fathers, in which he lives, and in which he expects to die? We admire those letters, in which the Jew, the Turk, the Persian speak of the worship of their respective deities, with transport and enthusiastic reverence; and do we ridicule a work, on the authority of which the Christian's faith stands supported! what an inconsistency! what wicked absurdity!

O! my

O! my dear children: if you could look into my soul, you would see that all my ambition is, that you should render unto God the things which are God's; that you should observe his law, respect his ministers, nor tamely suffer wicked raillery to be levelled against any thing which relates to divine worship. The least pleasantry upon so sacred a subject, is almost always blasphemy.

WHENEVER you approach as near to the end of your life as I am at this time, you will, I hope, have as lively a sense of that awful Deity, which we are too apt to forget in the days of health, and in the vigour of life: his justice on one side, and his mercy on the other, will then engage all your thoughts, and all your admiration.

WHENEVER you can truly say you fear nothing but God, you will consider the approach of death, only as an entrance on a state of happiness. A life full of crimes, and even a life that has been unprofitably spent, is a dreadful object to the eyes of a Christian at the point of death. But observe, that the piety, which I am at present recommending to you, is only such as is manly, rational, and solid; founded on the authority of the gospel, and recommended and enforced by the Christian church, in every age and nation, in which Christianity is known. Superstition

tion never yet made a good Christian. It only exposes religion to contempt, to make it consist in those frivolous ceremonies, which true piety disclaims.

O! If I had but the knowlege of those great and holy men, whose names we justly venerate! I would paint true religion to my children in colours the most lively, and represent it in terms the most endearing that can be conceived: I would shew them that the beauteous firmament itself, is but a faint image of the spiritual purity of religion; and that the soul, which it enlightens, is far superior to the material heavens.—O thou spirit of truth! descend into the hearts of my children; convincing them so thoroughly of the vanity of the world, that they may be attached to Thee alone! I would rather wish they should expire in my presence, than that they should ever renounce their religion: It is their happiness to be born within its influence: their ancestors were firm believers of the truths of Christianity; and with my latest breath I pray, that, above all other riches, they may possess the inestimable treasures of substantial piety.

Excuse, my dear children, the irregularity of this conference: my language is the effusion of a heart, which utters its sentiments in a desultory manner. The desire I have of saying a thousand

thousand things at the same time, creates a confusion of ideas, and this desire terminates only in weak endeavours.

INDEED I have the most dreadful conflicts within myself: my body, tho' little better than an empty shadow, swallows up my soul, and abaseth it to the earth; it gives me no other proof of its existence than my sufferings; the pains I feel have an influence on every thought and expression. But I comfort myself by reflecting that this state is only a passage to a better; and that the hour is at hand, when my gracious God will receive me into the arms of his mercy. How dear to me is that religion which presents such happiness to my view! What an enemy to his own peace is the man, who would discard his best friend, his supreme consolation in this world!

WHAT I have said to you on this important topic deserves to be made the subject of your most serious reflections; as well because it is the language of truth itself, as because it is the exhortation of a dying parent. How meanly would you think of me, if I were so regardless of your *first* concern, as, in these my last moments, to exhort you to be careful only to secure the blessings of the present life! The sight of my pallid countenance, which is the very image of death, would shew you, that I should be
equally

equally weak and wicked in wishing to deceive you, and that the world, with all its charms, is in reality nothing more than a dream which deceives us, and which passes away with incredible rapidity.

REASON alone will convince you that there is nothing but God and his religion, the continuance whereof we can ensure; and that every thing has an end, except the dominion of virtue. Good heavens! in what a situation should I find myself, if I had only reckoned upon this mortal life; if all my happiness had centered within the circle of a few years! I should see nothing before me but annihilation, or something yet more terrible: but, by the help of religion, my mind is raised up to God; and from the mansions of the grave I perceive a light arising, diffused by the mercy of that God, whose goodness is the source of my delight. This is my consolation, and that of every Christian: this also, my dear children, will be your comfort, if you faithfully observe the divine commandments.

You are by no means left at liberty to follow the dictates of your own passions, or to walk in the paths of unbelief. The education which you have received, the advice of your father just before his death, and my admonitions under

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under the same circumstances, make you accountable for your conduct to your country, and to all mankind. They will listen to you, they will watch you, and if your behaviour is unsuitable to the advantages, with which you have been distinguished, you will be universally despised.

THUS it is that the world itself can take its revenge of you ; and, indifferent as it may appear about religion, it will always be ready to take her part against you. Every one will be ready to cry out, how is it possible that persons so virtuously educated should give themselves up to such licentiousness ! surely their hearts must be more than ordinarily corrupt.

BUT you will not I hope be restrained altogether by this consideration ; an earnest desire to please God, and not to degenerate from the honour of your ancestors, will, I trust, engage you to persevere in the practice of your duty.

YOU have too just a sense of this, to forget him who hath made you ; or to neglect to offer him, every morning and evening of your lives, the tribute of adoration and love ; or to forsake the assemblies of those holy persons, who never fail to implore the assistance of heaven.

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It is only by debasing ourselves to a level with the brute creation, that we lose the idea of God. How can we forget him, in whom we live, and by whom we have our being? How can we fail to delight in the service of him, who is the author and fountain of all our honour and happiness? How richly do they deserve the name of fools, who are regardless of the worship of God, and who affect to despise the ordinances of religion?

I am not afraid that you will be prejudiced against the true religion, by being told, that it abounds with incomprehensible mysteries: common sense will inform any one, that an infinite Being is a fathomless abyss; and that his nature is unsearchable. But I fear lest your passions should seduce you: these only can persuade you to believe that Christianity is not the work of God.

BUT let us draw the veil over an event, the very possibility of which is so dreadful: I had much rather persuade myself that, like your forefathers, you will live in the fear of God; and that, like them, you will die in an humble hope of being admitted into his blessed presence. If you waited only for my death, before you declared in favour of infidelity, alas! how little would you gain by it! Will not your heart be
equally

equally open to that God who seeth you now, when I am removed out of your sight? It is he, and not such a poor worm of the earth as I am, that you ought to regard; that Being who is merciful to the good, but terrible to the ungodly.

O! how often hath the idea of his justice affrighted me! Even at this time, when I have a deep sense of his mercy impressed upon my mind, the thoughts of my dissolution, and circumstances which will attend it, make me afraid: the profusion of tears, which my friends will shed, the solemn procession, the profound respect of my attendants, all serve to fill my weakened mind with awful apprehensions. One while I see nothing but the Majesty of the living God, and the insignificance of the creature, which he is about to sacrifice: at another time, with most dutiful submission I await the blow, which shall reduce me to my original dust, as a tribute due to his sovereign Majesty.

How wonderful will be the instantaneous change in our ideas! how far beyond the power of reason to comprehend! it stands astonished at the view of that immensity into which I am about to enter! yet a moment——and God alone will either fill me with His glory, or overwhelm me with the terrors of His justice.

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What an alteration ! all the kings in the universe must experience the same fate.

IT is not the terror of the grave, nor the horrible corruption which this body of mine is about to experience, nor that eternal oblivion to which I shall be consigned, which affrights me ; but that new world, which I see only as through a glass darkly, and of which we only know any thing, when we are dying ; that strange land, to which all generations are destined to go, and from which no one is permitted to return.

THIS, my dear children, is the great object which ought to engage your attention ; and not altogether the renown which you may acquire in arms, or the rank to which you may be advanced at court.

As for your mother, while you are all of you deeply engaged in the tumult of worldly affairs, she perhaps——but why, gracious Lord, should I disquiet myself with uncertainty ? I cannot be ignorant that Thy mercies are infinite ; and that heaven is open for the admission of all who sincerely love and trust in Thee.

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O! my children! the dearest objects of my affection, it is to God himself that I recommend you: His providence will guard your youth: it extends itself even to the most inconsiderable part of the creation. His love towards you will supply the loss of your relations, which are now no more. No one can be so much your father, as He is: you will find Him to be such, while you live; you will also experience His mercy in the hour of death: He is every where present; and on all occasions: but He will be no longer your's, if ever you forsake Him.

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CONFERENCE XIX.

On the Vanity of the World.

FOR three weeks this exemplary lady had found herself somewhat better; at the end of which her appetite failed her, all at once; this, together with her loss of sleep, reduced her to the lowest state of weakness imaginable: yet she wished to have one other opportunity of conversing with her children; tho' the instructions which she had already given them were so full, as to leave hardly any thing that was necessary, unsaid.

THE extreme weakness of my present state, says she, affords me an occasion of speaking to you on the vanity of all things in this world: look at me with attention: see how dim my eyes appear; how emaciated my person, and what possession death has already taken of me: this was the woman, that appeared not long ago with such éclat; that was celebrated for her amiable qualities, as well as for her external

accomplishments. Here are only the remains of what she was; a mere shadow—a nothing.

THIS situation has rendered me much more of a philosopher, than all the books that were ever written on the subject could have done: alas! whilst I suffer, and even am dying by degrees, I have seen all those objects gradually lose their value, which my imagination raised far above their real worth. Pleasures now appear to me only as mere illusions, and honours as an empty vapour. Truth seems every day to take me by the hand, and shew me the vanity of this world, and the emptiness of every thing which it possesseth.

THE same effect is produced in me, which the autumn every year exhibits to our view: just as we then see the beauties of nature gradually disappear, I have seen the grandeur of this world diminished, its most valuable possessions debased, and all its ornaments stript off, as leaves from the trees by the winter's blast.

FALSE appearances dazzle our eyes while we enjoy perfect health; every thing then bewitches us; every thing seduces us; every thing appears to us eternal in its duration: but scarce hath a fit of sickness seized us, but truth dispels the
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the charm, and recalls us to ourselves, leaving us to behold nothing but a veil of darkness drawn over all that heretofore excited our admiration.

IN proportion as I draw nearer to my grave, the horizon grows darker; and those entertainments, which once enchanted me, those balls which charmed me, those assemblies which intoxicated my mind and my senses, seem only phantoms, of which I have been the dupe, which, on a moment's reflection disappear.

It is wonderful to observe what an indifference for life a tedious illness gives us: how it detaches us from those false pleasures, which have no other reality in them, than the remorse and weariness which they occasion. Providence almost always interposes itself to undeceive us; and to convince us, that in Him alone all our admiration and all our researches ought to center.

COULD you have thought, my dear children, that I should, in the space of a few months, become an object so different from myself; an emblem of all human miseries, and even a frightful spectre! perhaps, indeed, you have not courage enough to behold me: at least, look beyond those shadows of death, which surround

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me; dwell not on those melancholy objects which offend the sight; but amidst those sad ruins, which my body has undergone, separate that heart which is still entire, and loves you with inexpressible tenderness; that alone has not yet felt the ravages of death; but alas! like the wretched skeleton that surrounds it, must soon return to the dust from which it was originally formed.

It will only be my immortal spirit, of which we are regardless amidst the bustle of the world, that will constitute the whole of my existence, 'till the time when my body shall be reanimated. Alas! the only part of me, which hath any stability or duration, is that, which I so long suffered to be utterly forgotten: and all those flattering objects, which heretofore soothed my vanity, are now departed as a dream.

WHAT folly is it, my children, to be so strongly attached to objects of such a transitory nature! to put one's confidence in things, which have only the appearance of good! alas! if all the most captivating scenes in the world could be now exhibited to my view; had I now the disposal of crowns and treasures, what advantage could I receive from them? Could they one moment arrest the hand of death? could they give the smallest degree of strength
to

to my body, or beauty to my person? and even if they were capable of producing such wonders, would they be of any continuance? every thing here below, not excepting even life itself, is but a dream. How many great men have you seen pass away? tho' their glory appeared immortal, we now scarcely remember, that they ever existed. Death hath destroyed not only their bodies, but their very name and their remembrance.

O! how low doth human greatness sink, when the curtain is drawn up, and we see only the Majesty of God? it is nothing more than an imperceptible point, lost in the abyss of immensity.

I have lived in the society of persons, among whom my fortune, rank, and dignity attracted many admirers, when the vivacity of pleasure intoxicated my heart, and charmed my senses; but all that glory is departed as a shadow, and the societies themselves are sunk into nothing. A few years have effected this strange revolution: time is a pitiless destroyer, which is daily consuming every thing that is mortal, and by degrees annihilates itself.

O heavens! what a vacancy appears before my eyes, when I review the number of persons within the circle of my own acquaintance, who are now no more! enough almost to form a world! you will very soon add me to the number: my slender voice, my emaciated figure, my exhausted frame, all unitedly declare, that I have nothing to expect within the compass of the universe, but five or six feet of earth.

THE same lot awaits you all, at some little distance of time. Your youth will pass away like a rose, and for ought we know, you are this very moment on the brink of destruction. The grave receives as many young persons as old: every creature is tributary to death; he is an unrelenting creditor, who suffers no one to be at rest.

How strangely should I have been deceived, if I had reckoned upon threescore or fourscore years! by the blast of the Almighty the bloom of my life is faded away; and I am brought to contemplate my death, in a state of extreme weakness: and ought I to complain of this state? I, who, like other human creatures, was born to die; and whose dissipation and folly have deserved a large portion of the cup of bitterness and sorrow.

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It is only by the tenderness of my affection, that you can know me to be your mother: sickness has so entirely effaced every line of my person, as to render me quite a stranger to my own family, and to all my attendants: they look shy upon me; they are afraid to come near me; and it is only their exceeding great affection for me, that gets the better of their unwillingness to approach me. I am very far from blaming them; for I have much ado even to remember myself.

It is only this perspective that discovers truth to us: while we see nothing but the gaudy splendor of the world, we live in the midst of error and delusion; but as soon as we reflect upon our frailty, we turn towards ourselves, and towards heaven; we penetrate even into the reality of things, and do not suffer ourselves to be dazzled by appearances.

How thankful ought I to be, that death approaches me so gradually, as insensibly to reconcile me to it, and withdraw my attention from every seducing object! I pass my days in reflecting on the sources of my life which are exhausted, in reading those books which remind me of my latter end: for it is right that you should know that I never spare myself on this subject. Every morning I take my look-

ing-glass to see to what state death reduces us ; and often, very often I am reminded, that my coffin is just ready to receive me.

THERE it is, my children, that very soon your fond mother, without either sense or motion, and without any prospect of returning to this world again, will be destined to moulder in the bosom of corruption. O ! fearful thought ! — But I will spare your tenderness on a subject too affecting for you, as well as for myself : you are not ignorant, (indeed who is ?) that this dismal end is the lot of all men ; and that in spite of the pleasures, which delude them, in spite of the false glory which dazzles them, they will fall into the depths of horror and oblivion.

DREADFUL as the darkness of the tomb may appear, it has enlightened me more than the brightness of the sun : this only shews me perishable objects ; that discovers to me the excellence of my spiritual part, and the majesty of my God, which before were in a manner concealed from me : by the help of the light which that imparts to me, I have gone through the whole world, and have discovered nothing but vanity and misery ; I have seen nothing but death and dying persons, but burials and epitaphs.

SEE

SEE all that remains to me of earthly greatness ; a short inscription serves to inform others ; that we once lived, and are now no more ; and even this is effaced by length of time. The marble itself decays ; and the eternity of the supreme Being triumphs over the nothingness of man.

I have said enough I hope, my dear children, to convince you, that I do not wish for inscriptions, or magnificent titles on my tomb : I am nothing more than dust, and to the same element am I returning, from which I was formed. And can dry bones reduced to dust, and mouldering in corruption, deserve a panegyric ? O ! where shall we set bounds to our vanity, if it does not sink into nothing at the very sight of a tomb !

I think you must have opportunities enough of discovering that I am too thoroughly sensible of the vanity of the world, to wish to survive myself, in wretched praises inscribed on my monument : rather let me atone for my errors and my follies by an eternal oblivion. Heaven would arm itself against me, if I thought of decorating a miserable sepulchre ; it would only serve to perpetuate my pride beyond the limits of this present life, if I should attempt by improper ornaments to alter the very nature

nature of that, which in itself is nothing but misery and corruption.

ALL that I require of you, my beloved friends, is to come sometimes to the place of my interment; not merely to shed a few tears over my cold and senseless ashes, but to recall to your minds the instructions which I have given you. That awful solemnity, that mournful silence which prevails in the neighbourhood of sepulchres, will give you leisure and inclination to meditate seriously on all that I have said to you. The representation of death is the best school, wherein we can learn to live as we ought; to raise the soul from earthly things, and to fix it upon God.

PROMISE me, that you will sometimes visit that instructive spot: I invite you thither; and if you love me well enough to have your minds properly stored with the precepts which I have delivered to you, you will consider me as actually present with you there; I shall have no other method of appearing to you or conversing with you.

ALAS! my poor children, what a melancholy task am I imposing on you! if the world knew it, it would be silly enough to treat it with contempt; but my affection prompts me to communicate

municate to you this useful and important secret: leave the world to act for itself; and never listen to it in any matter which concerns your duty. It is fond of nothing which does not contribute to its amusement; and esteems nothing but what flatters its taste for vanity and pleasure.

WHAT an impassable gulph is about to interpose itself betwixt the world and me! yet a little while, and I shall neither know what scenes of entertainment are exhibited; nor what revolutions take place in it: yet a very little while, and all ideas of the succession of months and years will be utterly lost: but that which gives me some concern is, that this spot of earth on which you remain will be lost in that immensity which awaits me; so that I shall be totally unacquainted with your conduct or your destination: What a change must be wrought in my existence! what a revolution in my sentiments? is it possible to conceive, that an instant should produce such astonishing effects? at present I cannot properly be said to belong either to this world or the other: I am like a traveller divided between two different ways, and death, in the twinkling of an eye, will put an end to my uncertainty. One while I feel myself reluctant; at another time I desire the stroke: strange alternative! on one side, is the prospect of
supreme

supreme felicity ; on the other, the pain of being separated from that which is most dear to me.

I doubt not, my children, but my love for you will be considered as romantic ; and indeed, I believe it rises to an uncommon height : but this at least I am sure of, that I am not mistaken in the advice which I have given you : it is the language of truth ; it is the voice of a dying friend that you have heard.

WE are continually running with eagerness to a new tragedy : we are filled with the sad scenes which it presents ; and we find a degree of pleasure even in the tears which it excites. Here, my children, is a scene yet more affecting : we have no recourse to fiction, here : the chief character in this tragedy is a mother really expiring ; the sentence is pronounced, and is on the very point of being executed.

I have for some days felt myself more weak than usual, and find that my life is now making its escape from this tottering frame ; nothing indeed supports me but my tenderness for you ; hitherto it has detained my fugitive spirit, but at length it will be forced to yield.

COME

COME hither, that I may embrace you; if you have the courage to join your lips to an expiring body, and to bathe in a flood of tears. Alas! I have nothing but tears to give you; the weakness of my body, and the strength which yet remains destroy my powers of utterance.

How sad the separation! What a mournful farewell! The tenderness of my affection reminds me of the hour, in which I brought you into the world: but there is this sad difference; that I this day behold you, to see you no more. Support me, gracious Father, in this dreadful trial: suffer me not to sink under the burthen of maternal tenderness. I know that I ought to forget every thing for thy sake: and yet my heart never ceases to think of my children. Dear as they are to me, efface them for ever from my memory, if this love either is, or will be imputed to me as a fault.

BUT, what am I saying? Good God! thou knowest, that I only love them for thy sake; and that I wish them no other happiness, than that which arises from obedience to thy law: this is my only reason for wishing to live among them a few years, had it been thy gracious will, viz. to establish in them the love of that which is good: this it is, which makes my separation from my children a thousand times
more

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more painful, than the approaching separation of my soul from my body. See! there they are! Yet do I see, and hear them! Yet are they——

BUT what pain and distraction is this, which seizes me! the pleasure I now have in them is but a momentary gratification; yet a little while, and there will not be a person upon earth, who will love them with a thousandth part of the tenderness with which their mother loves them. O! how am I lost in the depth of such reflections!

C O N.

CONFERENCE XX.

ON RELATIVE DUTY.

OUR excellent lady, having received a visit from her brother-in-law, and having conversed with him for half an hour, desired he would permit her to introduce her children to him: when, in the language of the tenderest affection, she thus addressed them.

THIS, my dear Children, is the person whom henceforth you are to consider as your parent: as you are connected with him by the ties of consanguinity, I beseech you to attach yourselves to him by the obligations of inviolable friendship: the love you have for me, which is about to expire, when I shall no longer exist in this world, ought to be transferred to your uncle: to his favour I recommend you: no one can give you better advice than he can.

THEN turning herself towards her brother, she addressed him thus: O my dear brother,
you

you who continually remind me of my excellent husband, and in whom I have always found such sentiments as one so nearly related to him may easily be supposed to entertain, have pity on these children : pity their tender age ; pity their orphan-state, when I shall be taken from them. My days are ended ; my life is but a blast ; and nothing remains to me, but the regret of having wretchedly mispent it.

O ! that I could now be assured by you that my wishes would be accomplished : what would become of these unhappy creatures in the midst of a most dangerous world, if they were not blest with your friendship ! in them, my dear brother, recollect both their father, whom you affectionately loved, and their mother, who has no power of utterance beyond sighs and tears.

My heart is inexpressibly affected at this dreadful separation ; which is like being torn from one's self ; as I before observed to you, it is more terrible to me than the horrors of the grave.

FORGIVE me, gracious Lord ! Thou knowest, that even in my dreams, even in the most solemn acts of devotion, even in the prayers addressed to thy heavenly Majesty, the remembrance of my family continually interposed itself,

self, to distract my mind : in vain have I wished to have my whole attention fixed upon Thee : in vain have I endeavoured to become wholly absorbed by the contemplation of Thine infinite perfections ; my thoughts perpetually recur to those objects of my love, which Thou hast given me, and art now about to separate from me.

ALAS ! my dear children, I feel that I have much less fortitude than I appear to have : one moment's reflection on your sad condition, one single thought on the subject of our separation, overwhelms my soul with the deepest sorrow. O ! Heaven ! my mind hath but too much sensibility at present : e'er long, no visible object will affect it : these, my dear children, are the last struggles of my affection : my heart at this moment seems to collect every thing that is most tender and affectionate, in order to bid you an everlasting farewell.

At these words she melted into tears, when her brother-in-law answered ;

“ No, my sister, God will not be offended with that tenderness for which you blame yourself : He is goodness itself ; and the holy scriptures speak of nothing but his love ; if your affection for your children were merely carnal
and

and earthly, the case were different; but your love for them is that of a Christian parent, who is chiefly solicitous for their eternal salvation.

“ MAKE yourself as easy as possible on their account; you entrust them to my care, and I will not be regardless of their welfare: I shall consider them as my own children; in me they shall at once experience the authority of a father, and the affection of a mother; and I verily believe we shall none of us forget the confidence you repose in us. Comfort yourself, therefore, with reflecting, that you leave us only preparing ourselves to follow you; since this life, however long it may be accounted, is in reality no more than a state of momentary existence.”

Patrick Henry
Book Dec 18

CONFERENCE XXI.

On Kindness to Domestics.

THOUGH our excellent mother appeared to have exhausted her whole power of utterance in these admonitions to her children, yet one subject remained, arising from the care she took to recommend to their kindness her family and dependents.

WHEN they were all together, she said to her sons, in a voice that could with difficulty be heard: "I charge you to be kind to these my domestics, who have always been strongly attached to me: some of them served your father, and others have given me every proof of the most disinterested regard: I have not forgotten them in my will; but that is not sufficient: they have a demand on you for kindnesses, as friends in distress; for it is in this point of view, that I would have you consider them: they are sprung from the same origin, and are destined to the same end with ourselves.

O! how unreasonable is that pride which the world affects, and which makes us look down
with

with contempt on persons, in every essential respect, like ourselves?

NEVER forget, that we dishonour and debase human nature, whenever we treat any person with disdain, merely because his external appearance is meaner than our own: your names, when you were baptized, were entered in the same register with those of the poorest; and the dust, to which you will one day be reduced, may assure you that the same destiny of mortality awaits us all.

AM not I going to be mixed with the lowest and meanest of my fellow-creatures? shall I not be reduced to a level with the humblest slave? thus doth death cast down the high looks of the proud.

You will indeed act, agreeably to my wishes, when you treat your domestics with kindness; when you watch over their morals, and take care of their health; God knows that even at the time, when pride and a love of the world fed my vanity, I was never altogether unmindful of them; nor ever spoke to them in a haughty stile; if I ever did, here they are, let them witness against me."

To these words her domestics could only reply with sighs and lamentations; and her children, overwhelmed with grief, with interrupted accents, said:

"O! that

"O! that your days could be prolonged in proportion to the ardency of our desires! you should acknowledge, in our sentiments, a perfect copy of your own: you should then see and know, that nothing can ever remove from our hearts the love with which they are filled towards you, or the maxims with which you have so richly stored our minds.

"OUR life will from this time be nothing but a life of bitterness and sorrow; the blow, with which we are about to be overwhelmed, threatens us——O! heavens! spare."——

LET us, my dear children, for the last time, mix our tears together, the moment approaches, when, insensible to your cries, I shall no longer behold this earth, or be interested in what is passing on it; I shall not even have the consolation of feeling that tender anxiety, that pleasing pain, which I now suffer on your account.

YOUR uncle will communicate to you the contents of my will: I have too good an opinion of you to think you will disapprove of the legacies, which I have bequeathed to the poor, and to some persons, with whose merit I am well acquainted.

A few days after this last interview, her disorder made such a progress, that, being at the very point of death, she received a visit from
her

her children, who, with the tenderest effusions of grief, requested her last blessing.

THEN, just opening her dying lips, she with the utmost difficulty said:

“THE hand of death is upon me; your mother is no more.—May the Lord receive you under his protection! with my last breath I earnestly beseech him to *pardon* ME, and to *bless* YOU. You now see little more of me, than a particle of earth, about to be recommit-
ted to the earth! such is the end of human greatness: adieu! my dear, my affectionate children, adieu for ever.

“MY grave is opening,—eternity commences.—Gracious Lord,—receive my spirit.”

HER eyes still looked for her children ’till she expired.—Thus died this incomparable mother, the remembrance of whom religion will long preserve.

HER daughter survived her only a few days: she died thro’ excessive grief; and her sons, not regardless of the instructions which they had received, did honour to the memory of their parents, by a life worthy of their birth and their education.

F I N I S.



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